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# Governor Theodore Roosevelt and the New York Republican Machine

Lawrence Joseph Cross

*Loyola University Chicago*

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GOVERNOR THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE  
NEW YORK REPUBLICAN MACHINE

by

Lawrence Joseph Gross, S.J.

*Manuscript*

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## LIFE

Lawrence Joseph Cross was born in Dayton, Ohio, March 4, 1919.

He was graduated from the University of Detroit High School, Detroit, Michigan, June, 1937, and the following year entered the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio. In June, 1943, he received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University, Chicago. Two years later he began his graduate studies in History.

He has pursued the regular course of studies of the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio, and at West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana. From 1945 to 1948 he taught History, English and Latin at St. Ignatius High School, Cleveland, Ohio.

## PREFACE

Theodore Roosevelt has been pictured in biographies and text books as one of the most successful independent politicians in our country's history. His independence of the party machine and his freedom from any "corrupt alliances" have always been listed among his virtues.

While he was Governor of New York, the State Republican organization was an unusually unified and well-knit group of leaders at whose head was "Boss" Platt. His power has often been exaggerated and the nature of his leadership misunderstood, but there is no doubt that he was the most influential man in New York Republicanism from 1890 till after 1900.

It is the purpose of the present work to investigate the relations between Governor Roosevelt and the Republican machine which Platt headed, from 1898 to 1900. To what extent was Roosevelt independent of the machine? Was he ever hostile to it? Did he submit to Platt's "rule" at all? These are questions which the following pages are intended to answer.



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## CHAPTER I

### ROOSEVELT AND THE MACHINE BEFORE 1898

In order to understand the relations between Theodore Roosevelt and "Boss" Platt's political machine while the former was governor, it is necessary to review the background of each and trace the development that took place down to the year 1898. By that date Platt had been in politics almost twice as long as Roosevelt, and for nine years had been the recognized leader of the Republican organization. He represented the "Old Guard" of the party whose rule was already passing into younger hands. Of these Roosevelt was soon to become the outstanding representative.

Thomas C. Platt was born in 1833 at Owego, a village in Tioga County in lower New York State. His father, a prominent lawyer and rigid Presbyterian, wanted the boy to be a clergyman, so he sent him to the local academy and then to Yale, where sickness forced him to retire at the end of his freshman year in 1850. This evidently ended the senior Platt's dream of a clerical vocation for his son; before long the youth was working in a drug store. In the humble obscurity of this apothecary shop were begun both the financial and political careers in

which Platt was to achieve outstanding external success.

In his autobiography Platt claimed that he had "drifted into politics--just drifted."<sup>1</sup> The circumstances were ideal for such drifting. In those days the drug store in many towns was the accepted meeting-place where men loved to gather and air their views on current topics of interest, especially politics. Platt's place of employment was such a discussion center for Owego. He was a bright young man, and he delighted in reading the speeches of Thurlow Weed, currently the political leader in the state, of William H. Seward, and Horace Greeley. It is significant that by 1856 young Platt and a friend were owners of their own drug store, the back office of which soon became the local political center.

In 1856 Platt voted in his first national election. Thus his political birth coincided with the birth of the Republican Party. He was active in organizing it in Tioga County. That two-thirds of the county voted Republican in the 1856 and 1858 elections shows how successful he and his fellow workers were. In 1860, from his drug store headquarters he organized the torchlight procession for the Lincoln campaign. By the end of the sixties he had assumed the recognized political leadership of Tioga County through his election as chairman of the

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<sup>1</sup> Louis J. Long, ed., The Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt, New York, 1910, xxi.

county Republican Committee. He was also a shrewd business man. Before 1870 he was President of Tioga County National Bank, a director of the Southern Central Railroad of New York, and owner of large lumber interests in Michigan.<sup>2</sup>

In 1870 the Tioga Boss<sup>3</sup> began a steady rise in the political field outside his county. At the Republican State Convention of that year he allied himself with Senator Roscoe Conkling and helped him in the fight against former Governor Reuben E. Fenton for the control of the party. By threats and the liberal use of federal patronage, Conkling won out. During the ten or more years of the old Senator's rule, Platt grew ever closer to him; he studied his methods and learned from his mistakes. At the same time he moved steadily upwards in the party ranks. He was elected to Congress in 1872; he was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1876; in the State Convention of 1877 he was first the temporary, then the permanent chairman of the convention. Two years later he was the New York member of the National Committee. In 1880 his position as chairman both of the state committee and of the executive committee

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2 Harold F. Gosnell, Boss Platt and His New York Machine, Chicago, 1924, chap. II.

3 Gosnell says that Platt at this time "was already a dictator of local nominations in his own district." Ibid., 17.

of the state committee, made him second only to Conkling in his influence in New York Republicanism. He was, moreover, as Gosnell says, "a most important figure" during the 1880 National Republican Convention.<sup>4</sup>

At this convention was begun a series of events that was to close this phase of Platt's life. His faction of the party, the Stalwarts, failed in their efforts to renominate President Grant for a third term. The Half-Breed, James A. Garfield, won the nomination. In the ensuing campaign the New York organization, under Stalwart domination, remained apathetic until Garfield himself came to make a "deal" for its support. Some arrangement was made,<sup>5</sup> for the state machine came to life. Chiefly through Platt's efforts, a special train took the presidential candidate to enthusiastic crowds throughout the state; parades were organized; workshops were plastered with appropriate literature. Garfield carried New York and the nation.<sup>6</sup> Platt was rewarded with election to the United States Senate, becoming the junior partner of Conkling. The prospects seemed bright, indeed.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>5</sup> "Platt claimed that Garfield promised in return for the Stalwart support to consult the Conkling organization and to regard its wishes as 'paramount with him touching all questions of patronage.'"--Ibid., quoting Platt's autobiography.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 25.

Then came disaster. President Garfield appointed Judge William H. Robertson Collector of the Port of New York. This post was the seat of federal patronage and power, one of the most influential in the state.<sup>7</sup> As Robertson had led the Half-Breeds in the National Convention a year earlier in the fight against Grant's renomination, he was thoroughly detested by Conkling. Still more significant, Garfield made the selection not only without consulting the New York boss, but against his strong and open disapproval. When Conkling chose to fight, Platt, of course, joined him. The two resigned from the Senate rather than vote on the Robertson appointment. Since their organization was presumed to have control of the New York Legislature, they had reason to expect that they would promptly be re-elected by that body and so be returned in triumph to Washington. They were to be shockingly disappointed. Their Half-Breed enemies in New York did some adroit maneuvering; some of their supporters, weary perhaps of Conkling's "rule or ruin" policy, fell away. As a result Conkling and Platt were not re-elected, and their leadership was openly repudiated.<sup>8</sup>

They retired to temporary seclusion for that year. The 1881 State Convention was completely anti-Conkling. In 1882

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7 Ibid., 26.

8 Ibid., 28.

the old Boss tried a come-back. He managed to swing the State Convention to the nomination of Charles J. Folger, the Stalwart choice for governor. When, then, in the face of this move, the people of New York elected Democrat Grover Cleveland with the largest majority ever given a candidate for governor up to that time (192,000), Conkling was finished. His organization collapsed, and for a time confusion reigned among the New York Republicans.<sup>9</sup>

Platt, however, was younger. The bitterness of his humiliation only served to strengthen his determination to recover all he had lost, and perhaps acquire more.<sup>10</sup> Here, again, he was learning as he went along. The lesson taught by defeat was bitter, yet for that reason more lasting. Standing amid the ruins of Conkling's organization, he saw the Democratic landslide of 1882 was due to the discord among the Republicans. Henceforth "party harmony" would be a guiding principle of his political life and activity.

The first step on the comeback trail was taken in 1884 when Platt was elected delegate from his home district to the

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9 This was the period when young Theodore Roosevelt began his political career with his election to the New York Assembly. The confusion and lack of adequate leadership among the Republicans was a fortuitous circumstance that helped him greatly.

10 Gosnell, Boss Platt, 29, n. 13.



Republican National Convention. This shows that in spite of his defeat in the state-wide arena, he never lost the leadership of his native county. James G. Blaine was the leading candidate for the Presidential nomination. Conkling had always hated Blaine, and Platt had followed suit. Now, however, Conkling politically was dead. So Platt quickly joined the dominant faction, and he was the one who seconded Blaine's nomination. Though the "man from Maine," after winning the nomination lost to Cleveland, Platt was once more on the winning side within his party.

In 1885 he used his growing influence to help elect G. Z. Erwin as Republican speaker in the state Assembly. The following year his lieutenants arranged the nomination of Theodore Roosevelt for Mayor of New York City. Though this proved to be a mistake, at least he was keeping busy politically and making his influence felt.

He was most active in 1887 in the legislative caucus at Albany. Though not a member of the legislature he was influential through the many members he had helped put there. At this time his one goal was to replace Warner Miller, seeking re-election as United States Senator from New York, by Levi P. Morton.<sup>11</sup> A third candidate was Frank Hiscock. This senatorial

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<sup>11</sup> Miller was the Half-Breed who had been elected to the Senate in 1881 to succeed Platt, after he and Conkling had

fight was notorious, arousing great interest all over the state. The caucus was deadlocked: Miller was two votes short of the total needed to win, Morton twelve votes short, and Hiscock, a poor third, more than thirty short. The deadlock was finally broken when the Morton men all shifted their votes to Hiscock who was thus elected by a narrow margin. This was generally regarded as a Platt victory, since he was responsible for the shift of the Morton votes. He had defeated Miller and put the new Senator under obligation to himself. It meant a substantial rise of his political stock.<sup>12</sup>

This set the stage for the Republican National Convention at Chicago in June, 1888. At the State Convention in May Platt began his work by burying the hatchet with his recent arch-enemy, Warner Miller.<sup>13</sup> This took the form of an agreement by which Miller might have the nomination for governor the following September, while he and Platt should both go to the National Convention as delegates-at-large.

At Chicago Platt handled the large New York delegation in his now customary, quiet, unobtrusive way. On the first

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resigned. Cf. DeAlva S. Alexander, Four Famous New Yorkers, New York, 1923, 11 and 84.

<sup>12</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 34.

<sup>13</sup> In this incident we see the working of Platt's passion for "party harmony."

three ballots for the presidential nomination, Senator John Sherman of Ohio held a commanding lead. On the fourth ballot fifty-nine of New York's seventy-two delegates shifted suddenly to Benjamin Harrison of Indiana. This move vaulted Harrison from an obscure fourth place into a very close second place in the balloting. On the sixth ballot all seventy-two New York votes went to Harrison and were held firmly in line till the end. The seventh ballot brought California into the Harrison camp, and on the eighth came a stampede that nominated the Indianian before the roll-call reached Tennessee. Of Platt's influence in this maneuvering there can be little doubt. Sherman afterwards accused him of making a "corrupt bargain,"<sup>14</sup> while Platt himself later complained that Harrison had not kept his part of the deal.<sup>15</sup> The Harrison forces did not deny that some arrangement had been made.

Clearly Platt now had the upper hand in the New York G.O.P. At the State Convention early in September, 1888, "nothing stood in the way of harmony."<sup>16</sup> Warner Miller was duly nominated for governor, amid the wild and prolonged cheering of

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 121.

<sup>15</sup> Platt claimed he had been promised the Secretaryship of the Treasury. Cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 121.

the delegates. Platt sat by and beamed his approval.<sup>17</sup> He has been accused of foreseeing (and hoping for) what was to follow.<sup>18</sup> In the campaign Miller, by an indiscreet speech, alienated the liquor interests, whose votes and influence went to David B. Hill, the Democratic candidate. President Cleveland, on the other hand, lost large numbers of his own party by his outspoken tariff views. Hence the campaign slogan, "Harrison and Hill," was an exact forecast of the election results. Harrison won New York, and with it the nation, while Hill defeated Miller for Governor. Gosnell tells us that "this blow at Miller's prestige sent the county leaders to Platt for 'advice' and soon the papers were proclaiming the rise of the 'Easy Boss.'"<sup>19</sup> From now on Platt was recognized as the leader of his party in New York.

In 1858, when Thomas Platt was twenty-five years old and well on his way to political leadership in Tioga County, Theodore Roosevelt was born in New York City. He was reared in comfortable circumstances. His early education was obtained from occasional tutors, from wide reading, and from two trips abroad. After his return from the second journey he was again

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17 Ibid., 122.

18 Gosnell, Boss Platt, 35, n. 11.

19 Ibid., 36.

tutored for three intense years in preparation for entering Harvard. During this period also he worked hard and successfully to build himself up physically.<sup>20</sup>

His four years at Harvard were normal enough for one of his position.<sup>21</sup> He was active in as many ways as he could manage: e.g. athletics, Natural History Society, Finance Club, the Advocate editorial board. Before his graduation in June, 1880, he had started work on The Naval War of 1812, and had become engaged to be married. The marriage occurred on his twenty-second birthday, October 27, 1880.

Meanwhile he had acquired a great interest in politics. As Pringle says, he "was an ally of those who believed that the Best Element in the city should take more interest in public affairs."<sup>22</sup> Characteristically suiting the action to the belief, he began to investigate the possibilities offered by local politics. Gentlemen of his acquaintance, including

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20 For most of these biographical details I have used Henry F. Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt: A Biography, New York, 1931.

21 "Had Theodore not arrived at Harvard with an assured social backing, he might have had a lonely time. . . . In the end he made Porcellian, the loftiest of social honors. . . . So far as he associated with the other undergraduates at all, he lived among the minority called the club set. He rarely appeared at Memorial Hall for meals, but ate with a group known as the Dining Club, whose number included young Bostonians of social position and a New Yorker or two."--Ibid., 33, 34.

22 Ibid., 46.

businessmen, lawyers, and members of social clubs, laughed at the idea; politics were "low," he was told, and he shouldn't soil himself by associating with ordinary, run-of-the-mine politicians.<sup>23</sup> This was enough to determine him to do just the opposite. Since he wanted to be with, and of, the "governing class," he went out and joined the Twenty-first District Republican Club. This was also in the fall of 1880.

During the following winter Roosevelt attended classes at Columbia Law School, did some reading at his uncle's law office, and put in more work on The Naval War. He found law very dull, and writing was difficult and tedious; yet he worked hard at both.

What gave him real joy was attending the meetings of the Republican Club, where he found men from both groups of the party. In the minority were those who yearned for reform, and did little else. The rest were the "practical politicians" who, realizing Tammany's hold upon the city, made with it what deals they could and thus were able to maintain an active organization.<sup>24</sup> The district leader was Jake Hess. He "tolerated the reformers of the Union League Club in the hope of campaign contri-

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<sup>23</sup> Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography, New York, 1926, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 58.

butions."<sup>25</sup> His lieutenants and workers included ward-healers, saloon-keepers, and many others whose kind the young Harvard graduate was mixing with for the first time. It speaks well for Roosevelt that he came to know these men, learned to talk their language, and even won their respect. Though he must have known that they considered him a dude, he seems to have lacked all self-consciousness. He joined actively in the meetings and never lost his ideals for honest government. He gave speeches on civil service reform, which was heresy to all good machine men. Once, when he offered a resolution demanding non-partisan administration of the street-cleaning department, he heard his proposal voted down, 100-3. A lesser man might have crept from the hall after that, never to return, but Roosevelt was not at all dismayed. He knew he had much to learn; more important, he was willing to learn. He was energetic, high-minded and courageous, and had a sense of humor; he was confident of his own powers, and fearless in any fight. Such a man had to attract notice. When he spoke, people had to listen, sometimes in spite of themselves.

The young Mr and Mrs. Roosevelt took a belated honeymoon trip to Europe in the summer of 1881. Upon their return in September, Theodore was approached by a rebellious lieutenant

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25 Ibid.

of Jake Hess, one Joe Murray, who had taken a liking to the interesting and forceful young dude. Murray wanted to revolt against Hess by defeating the latter's nominee for Assemblyman from the Twenty-first District. Another candidate was needed: would Roosevelt run? He was persuaded to do so. Murray planned his coup carefully and succeeded completely. When Hess saw that he was defeated, he good-humoredly got behind the new candidate and gave him full support.

Roosevelt had the endorsement of the New York Times, the support of the Council of Reform, and the backing of his friends. But, as Pringle is at pains to point out, "the support that counted was the Republican machine. Roosevelt was sensible enough to place his destiny in the hands of its leaders."<sup>26</sup> Jake Hess and Joe Murray did their work well. Roosevelt won, 3490 to 1989.

The new Assemblyman attracted attention in Albany from the very beginning, because of his youth and a slight exhibitionism in the matter of dress.<sup>27</sup> Before four months had passed, however, he had attracted attention in a different way.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>27</sup> At twenty-three he was the youngest man in the Assembly. "He offended the sensibilities of the gentlemen of the legislature by appearing at a party caucus in evening dress." --Ibid., 66.



After he assumed office, January 1, 1882, the newspapers were filled for some time with accounts of the "Westbrook scandal," in which were involved Jay Gould of the Manhattan Elevated Railroad Co., State Attorney-General Hamilton Ward, and Supreme Court Justice T. R. Westbrook. Roosevelt did some investigating on his own and came up with enough specific evidence of fraud and corruption to justify an official inquiry by the Judiciary Committee of the Assembly.

Organization members of neither party wanted any investigation of either Gould or Westbrook. When Roosevelt, then, offered a resolution on March 29 demanding the investigation, it fell like a bursting bombshell on the whole Assembly. Organization resistance began immediately, but the young reformer continued to fight vociferously. It was front-page news all over the state, and public opinion as well as editorial pressure quickly rallied to the cause of justice. For two weeks the battle raged. By April 12, only one man dared speak in defense of the accused, and Roosevelt's resolution was adopted. It was an outstanding victory. He was now well-known throughout the state as an energetic, determined young man of independence and courage.<sup>28</sup> He had learned a valuable lesson, too.

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<sup>28</sup> The Judiciary Committee, of course, returned a report that vindicated Gould and Westbrook, declaring that there had been no wrong-doing. This whitewashing, however, did nothing to lessen the reputation Roosevelt had gained. He had done

As Pringle says, "editorial approbation of the resolution had been too much for the organization men."<sup>29</sup> It was the first time Roosevelt appealed to public opinion over the heads of the bosses and machine men; assuredly it was not to be the last time.

"Nothing succeeds like success." The triumph Roosevelt achieved in his first year at Albany settled him in his life's work.<sup>30</sup> Subsequent failures might temporarily discourage him; he would be driven from active participation in politics; but again, only temporarily.<sup>31</sup> Always he would come back. The lure remained to the end of his life too strong for him to re-

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his work by forcing the investigation to be made.

29 Pringle, Roosevelt, 72.

30 That he did not at first contemplate politics as a career is shown from his words to Charles G. Washburne, a Harvard classmate. After being nominated to the legislature for the first time, and before the election, Roosevelt wrote: "Don't think I am going to go into politics after this year, for I am not." Quoted by Joseph B. Bishop, Theodore Roosevelt and His Time, New York, 1920, 9.

31 After the disastrous National Convention of 1884, he wrote his sister from the West: "I think it will be a good many years before I get back into politics." (August 12.) And again: "I am sorry my political career should be over." (September 20.) To H. C. Lodge: "I have not believed and do not believe that I shall ever be likely to come back into political life." (November 11.) Yet, within two months (January, 1885) he was back in New York working mightily and successfully for William M. Evarts' election to the United States Senate. Cf. Anna R. Cowles ed., Letters of Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Cowles, New York, 1924, 61, 68; Henry Cabot Lodge, ed., Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, New York, 1925, I, 26.

sist.

He was re-elected to the Assembly for the 1883 session, and was made minority leader of his party, "a distinction virtually without precedent for one so young," with only a year of experience.<sup>32</sup> The 1884 session began with a Republican majority in the Assembly, and Roosevelt actively sought the position of Speaker which meant majority leadership. In this bid, however, he was defeated. He did obtain the chairmanship of a committee to investigate the city government of New York, and this proved to be of real value. It gave him first-hand knowledge of the city politics and brought him into contact with the police department which he was later to head.

The summer of 1884 brought a crisis in Roosevelt's life comparable in gravity to that of 1912, and not dissimilar. The state convention to select delegates to the coming National Convention met in April at Utica. Roosevelt went, filled with ambitious plans and definite ideas. He wanted to be named a delegate-at-large, and he was dedicated to the cause of defeating the presidential aspirations of James G. Blaine. After noisily advocating Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont for president, he was elected leader of the four delegates-at-large. He then claimed all four of these delegates for the Edmunds

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32 Pringle, Roosevelt, 74.

cause, though the supporters of President Arthur outnumbered the pro-Edmunds Independents more than two to one. After a struggle the young leader carried his point, and he consequently received national attention.<sup>33</sup> He was a champion of the Independents and of the reformers in the Republican ranks, to all of whom Blaine was anathema.

At the National Convention, in June, the political Galahad from New York campaigned intensely and obstreperously for Edmunds, but Blaine's strength was too great. He was nominated on the fourth ballot.<sup>34</sup>

"That there would be a revolt against Blaine," says Pringle, "became apparent immediately. How widespread would it be? What would Roosevelt the reformer, the hope of the independent voters, the new influence in American life, do?"<sup>35</sup> That was, indeed, the all-important question, and all too many people had their eyes on him, waiting for the answer. It was a painful position to be in. The Independents, after all, had been his

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33 New York's delegation was vital to any presidential candidate in the National Convention. Because of Roosevelt's flamboyant success at Utica and his outspoken opposition to Blaine, the latter's supporters were fearful of losing New York.

34 Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 24, 25.

35 Pringle, Roosevelt, 85.

chief supporters. Their praise and encouragement had been largely the reason for his success and prominence. They were now denouncing Blaine, as he had done before the Convention began, and they expected him to follow suit. Would he not now show the same courage and independence which had so far characterized his public life?

To do so would probably have been political suicide. Roosevelt decided not to risk it.<sup>36</sup> Guided, evidently, by the maturer experience of Henry Cabot Lodge, he announced: "I have participated in a Republican Convention, and by all the usages of the party, I would be expected to support the nominee."<sup>37</sup> This was bad enough; but when he took the stump in the campaign, actively supporting Blaine and attacking Cleveland, the Democratic candidate, a storm of criticism, rebuke and ridicule was

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<sup>36</sup> There is no doubt that he was thinking of joining the Independents in the revolt against Blaine. Pringle says: "The evidence points to the certainty that he was racked by doubts as he left Chicago." (*Ibid.*, 88.) And this evidence from five different sources, is presented convincingly. Other arguments to prove Roosevelt's doubt can be found in the speeches he made in Massachusetts on behalf of Lodge's candidacy for Congress, during the Blaine campaign. "I am glad that I have cast in my lot with the very great majority of the Republican Party." (October 21, 1884.) "Let me simply say in conclusion that I am delighted that I remained where by inheritance and education I feel I belong, with the Republican Party." (October 28.)--Lodge, Correspondence, 19, 25.

<sup>37</sup> New York Times, June 7, 1884, quoted in Pringle, Roosevelt, 85. For evidence of Lodge's influence on Roosevelt, cf. ibid., 88.

heaped upon him. When in November, Blaine and the Republicans went down to defeat, Roosevelt retired to his cattle ranch in the West.

Through this experience Roosevelt grew up politically. He had deliberately placed his party above all else. He had tried to convince himself that the Republicans, even with a Blaine at their head, were better for the country than the Democrats, no matter whom they might have. Pringle, writing of the months that preceded the Chicago convention, says that Roosevelt "was to choose between being a nice young man in politics and a professional politician."<sup>38</sup> Whether or not he began the year 1884 as a "nice young man," it is certain that he finished it as a professional politician.<sup>39</sup>

Although Roosevelt devoted most of the next three and a half years to ranching and to writing, it would be a mistake to believe that therefore he had even temporarily retired from politics.<sup>40</sup> From his ranch in the Dakota Territory he returned

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>39</sup> It is interesting to compare the accounts of this critical period in three authors: Pringle, Roosevelt, 85-91; Bishop, Roosevelt and His Time, 35-38; Lodge, Correspondence, 11.

<sup>40</sup> His letters to Lodge from the West are filled with descriptions of his hunting or his cow-punching. Yet nearly all these letters end with some reference to current political events. They show clearly the dominant place that public affairs always had in his interest and affection.

to the New York political arena in January, 1885. He helped secure the senatorship of New York for William M. Evarts against the opposition of Thomas Platt. In October of the same year he gave a speech at a Republican meeting in Brooklyn. By the fall of 1886 he and Platt had sufficiently settled their differences to enable the organization to run Roosevelt for Mayor of New York. He was a dismal third behind Abram S. Hewitt, Tammany's candidate, and Henry George, the land-reforming nominee of the laboring class. Once again he was plunged in deep discouragement, and with reason.<sup>41</sup> For two years he stuck to his writing, yet kept his interest in politics, too.<sup>42</sup>

The national campaign of 1888 brought him again to the fore. He was relieved that Blaine lost the nomination, and Harrison was a candidate he could honestly and wholeheartedly support. With his customary vigor he took the stump in October and November, and contributed his share to the Republican vic-

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<sup>41</sup> Pringle remarks that the 1886 defeat "revealed that there was no magic in the Roosevelt name." (Roosevelt, 115) That he was discouraged is shown in his letters, which were the mirror of his moods. For example, he wrote his sister, January 6, 1887, "I have not the slightest belief in my having any political future."--Cowles, Letters, 90.

<sup>42</sup> Occasional speeches helped keep him in the public eye. For example, he spoke to the Federal Club in May, 1887; in January, 1888, he addressed the Union League Club of New York, a reform group. Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 55, 62.

tory.<sup>43</sup>

His reward came in May, 1889, with his appointment to the Federal Civil Service Commission. He was happy to get the job. It meant activity again, of the kind he most liked.<sup>44</sup> Because of his long-standing interest in civil service reform, he was well suited for this office. The fact that he aroused opposition within the Republican administration is, perhaps, an indication that he did his duty conscientiously.<sup>45</sup> It is also significant that President Cleveland, re-elected in 1892, asked Roosevelt to stay on. He did so until April, 1895, when he accepted the post of Commissioner of the New York Police Board.

The next two years proved to be the stormiest of his

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 73; Cowles, Letters, 102.

<sup>44</sup> "I have pretty hard work," he wrote to Brander Matthews in July, 1899, "and work of rather an irritating kind; but I am delighted to be engaged in it."--Pringle, Roosevelt, 122, quoting the Columbia University Collection of Roosevelt-Matthews correspondence. He loved a fight, and his civil service work gave him plenty of opportunities. "I have been continuing my Civil Service fight, battling with everybody from Ingalls to Wanamaker and Porter."--Cowles, Letters, 113 (February 1, 1891.) Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 79-114.

<sup>45</sup> Most of Roosevelt's trouble came from Postmaster-General John Wanamaker, wealthy department store magnate. It is indicative of Wanamaker's political philosophy that within his first nine months in office, about 31,000 postmasters of the preceding administration had been replaced by "deserving" Republicans. Cf. Pringle, Roosevelt, 123.



career. As an important part of a reform administration<sup>46</sup> he had the duty of cleaning up the police department which for years had been filled with graft and corruption under Tammany rule. He started out magnificently.

He began the fight at once, using in it the weapons he had employed in its predecessors, full publicity, strict enforcement of law, and utter disregard of partisan political considerations. Trials of members of the force on various charges of neglect or misconduct, which had previously been conducted in secret, were conducted before the full Board in public. Appointments and promotions were made after examinations and on merit and fitness alone. Neither the payment of money nor the word of a political boss was any longer sufficient to "get a man on the force," or to secure his promotion in its service.<sup>47</sup>

His work attracted favorable notice in newspapers throughout the country. Even the London Times carried lengthy accounts of his activity.<sup>48</sup>

It may seem surprising, therefore, that his police department work ended on a note of futility and failure. By the beginning of 1897 his reform work was brought to a virtual standstill. True, the political bosses were chiefly responsible

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<sup>46</sup> The 1894 election followed a legislative investigation which had exposed to a shocked public the evils of New York's city administration. An anti-Tammany fusion elected William L. Strong, Republican candidate for mayor, who offered Roosevelt the Police Commission job. Cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt,<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Bishop, Roosevelt and His Time, I, 59-60.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Pringle, Roosevelt, 139-140; 150.

for this development.<sup>49</sup> But Roosevelt himself, by his excessive zeal in pursuing what he thought right, left himself and his administration open to their attacks.<sup>50</sup> He seemed to want to do everything at once. Lincoln's dictum, that it is better to plow around a stump than through it, might profitably have been applied by the impetuous police reformer. He tried to plow through the stump, which so damaged the plow that the rest of the field remained unfurrowed. He aroused so much opposition among all classes of citizens<sup>51</sup> that the reform movement itself was soon defeated. Tammany Hall was returned to power with large majorities in the fall of 1897.<sup>52</sup> By that time, though, Roosevelt had been Assistant Secretary of the Navy for seven months.

This post had come to him because of his work in the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 145; Bishop, Roosevelt and His Time, I, 60, 62, 64; Lodge, Correspondence, I, 144, 149, 151, 168, 188, 191, 198, 201, 202.

<sup>50</sup> "He delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, because of this surplus of zeal, and his career as police commissioner ended largely in failure."--Pringle, Roosevelt, 140.

<sup>51</sup> "Every now and then," he wrote to Lodge, in December of 1895, "I feel a momentary discouragement, for it really seems that there must be some fearful shortcoming on my side to account for the fact that I have not one N. Y. City newspaper or one N. Y. city politician of note on my side."--Lodge, Correspondence, 202-203.

<sup>52</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 151.

1896 presidential campaign.<sup>53</sup> After McKinley was elected, he knew he would have to reward Roosevelt with some post or other. The question probably was: "Where will he do least damage?"<sup>54</sup> At any rate the job in the Navy Department pleased him immensely and he tackled his duties there as he had done in every other office he had held. He accomplished a great deal, and all of it with much noise and fanfare. He continued to develop his undeniable talent for attracting attention and publicity. He was always "news."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Pringle remarks that Roosevelt was "a major figure in the campaign," being called on to speak in the localities where Bryan was strongest. (Ibid., 163.)

<sup>54</sup> The conditions in Cuba which were to lead to war with Spain had been getting worse for many months, with no sign of immediate improvement. McKinley sincerely desired peace, especially at this time. From this viewpoint the Navy Department was one of the worst places he could have put Roosevelt, who was "the avowed opponent of peace." But "the pressure calling for his appointment" was great. With Senator Lodge's assurances that Roosevelt would behave himself, McKinley finally gave in and made the appointment. Cf. Pringle, Roosevelt, 165.

<sup>55</sup> It should be remembered that Roosevelt was one of the most vociferous exponents of the new "large policy" for the United States. This credo of American imperialism included these articles: (1) to make the United States the indisputably dominant power in the Western Hemisphere, with the ultimate expulsion of all European powers from their New World holdings; (2) to build up a great United States Navy; (3) to get the ownership and control of an Isthmian canal; (4) to establish naval bases in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific; (5) to annex the Hawaiian Islands. Cf. Julius Pratt, "The 'Large Policy' of 1898," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIX, 1932-1933, 219-224.

Probably Roosevelt's most important accomplishment as Assistant Secretary of the Navy--certainly the most far-reaching in effect--was his activity with relation to George Dewey.

First, he had a hand in obtaining Dewey's elevation to lead the Asiatic Squadron in December, 1897.<sup>56</sup> Then on February 25, 1898, as Acting Secretary he sent the famous cable to the Commodore in the Far East which was largely responsible for the overwhelming victory at Manila Bay as soon as war was declared:

Washington, February 25.

Dewey, Hong Kong:

Order the squadron except the Monocacy to Hong Kong. Keep full of coal. In the event of declaration of war Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish Squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast, and then offensive operations in the Philippine Islands. Keep Olympia until further orders.

Roosevelt.<sup>57</sup>

This action meant the capture of the Philippines and their ultimate acquisition by the United States.

Roosevelt's sensational part in the actual fighting of the Spanish-American war is too well known to need repetition here. He resigned the Assistant Secretaryship on May 6, landed

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Pringle, Roosevelt, 178; Roosevelt, Autobiography, 216-218; George Dewey, Autobiography, New York, 1913, 167.

<sup>57</sup> Dewey, Autobiography, 179.

in Cuba in June, fought the Spaniards in July, returned to Long Island in August, and was mustered out on September 14. They had been four glorious months, full of dust, smoke, blood and glory. His name was known in every corner of the country.

Lodge had assured him early in July that "you could have pretty much anything you wanted" in the way of elective office.<sup>58</sup> By this time (September, 1898) the Colonel of the Rough Riders had decided what he wanted, and was taking steps to get it.

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<sup>58</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 320.

## CHAPTER II

### 1898: FROM COLONEL TO GOVERNOR

During the summer of 1898 the prospects of the Republican Party in New York were very uncertain. A governor was to be elected in the fall. That spring, before the fighting began in the War with Spain, the Republican incumbent, Frank S. Black, had seemed an obvious choice for re-election. He had won in 1896 with the greatest plurality ever given in a New York gubernatorial election, he was supported by most of the organization,<sup>1</sup> and during the 1898 session of the legislature he had

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1 Platt, however, had not been entirely pleased with certain independent tendencies Black had shown in the matter of appointment and legislation. In his Autobiography the Easy Boss records a conversation of April, 1898. When asked whether there was any doubt about Black's renomination the following fall, he claims to have answered prophetically that there was: war might be declared with Spain; that war might develop a hero whose popularity would force his nomination for governor; Theodore Roosevelt, General Francis V. Greene or Colonel Frederick D. Grant might turn out to be that hero. That this sibyllic utterance occurred only in Platt's imagination is shown by two statements: ". . . 'McKinley and Congress are liable to declare war on Spain at any moment. . . . Theodore Roosevelt has just resigned as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. . . .'" (Platt, Autobiography, 368. *Italics mine.*) Roosevelt did not resign till almost a month after McKinley sent in his war message to Con-

favored certain reform bills popular with the people.<sup>2</sup> He was a capable executive. By the end of July, however, complications had set in. The first, and most important, was the scandal of the "canal frauds." Two million or more of the \$9,000,000 appropriated for improving the state's canal system had been misused or squandered. Popular indignation placed the blame chiefly upon two Black-appointed officials, the Superintendent of Public Works and the State Engineer. In July the Governor's investigating committee confirmed the popular suspicion of mismanagement, but the officials in question were not removed nor were steps taken to prosecute them. The state-wide excitement caused by the canal revelations made Black's re-election highly unlikely. Indeed, any candidate the party might put up would be handicapped by this scandal.

By the middle of July a new situation had developed. The fighting in Cuba had produced many heroes for the people back home. Among these none was more popular or better known throughout the country than Theodore Roosevelt who had just won his colonelcy on the field of battle. His spectacular bravery

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gress. Nevertheless Platt's writing this supposed conversation does indicate two things: first, that even in the spring of 1898 he was not anxious for Black's renomination; and secondly, that Roosevelt's nomination the next fall was forced upon Platt.

2 Cf. Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 300-301.

(or at least the current accounts of it in the newspapers) had touched a strain of enthusiasm in everyone's heart and had added immeasurably to his reputation as a fearless, independent political reformer. Newspapers had started a Roosevelt-for-Governor boom.<sup>3</sup> Senator Thomas Platt and his Republican organization were not slow to see that the popular young Colonel might be able to obtain victory in the November elections.<sup>4</sup>

Several of the lesser leaders approached Platt on the subject.<sup>5</sup> The Easy Boss, however, was not readily convinced. Roosevelt's record indicated that nothing but trouble awaited the organization if they should nominate and elect the impetuous hero of San Juan. In his very first year of public office he had defied the opposition of all regular organization men by forcing an investigation in the Westbrook Scandal case. In 1884 he had joined forces with Warner Miller and the Independents in opposing Platt on the nomination of Blaine for president; the following year he had aided in William Evart's election as

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3 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 316.

4 Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 304. Gosnell, Boss Platt, 99, quotes a claim of Chauncey Depew that he was the one who convinced Platt to accept Roosevelt.

5 "Foremost among the leaders who pressed me on Mr. Platt. . . were Mr. Quigg, Mr. Odell--then State Chairman of the Republican organization, and afterwards Governor--and Mr. Hazel, now United States Judge."--Roosevelt, Autobiography, 270.



United States Senator against Platt's efforts for Levi Morton; as Civil Service Commissioner he had stirred up endless trouble for the Administration and the national organization, even opposing the President.<sup>6</sup> During his two years on the Police Board in New York he opposed the machine at every turn, arousing so much opposition that the city was returned to Tammany Hall by a landslide in 1897. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy he had done all he could to bring on the recent war. The prospect of trying to maintain party harmony with such a man as Republican Governor must have appalled Platt. Moreover, to Louis F. Payn, Edward Lauterbach and George W. Aldridge, organization leaders under Platt, Roosevelt was unthinkable.<sup>7</sup>

The Colonel of the Rough Riders, meanwhile, was still in service. He knew well how his political stock had soared be-

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6 In June, 1889, Roosevelt wrote to Lodge: "I have made this Commission a living force, and in consequence the outcry among the spoilsmen has become furious; it has evidently frightened both the President and Halford [the President's Secretary] a little. They have shown symptoms of telling me that the law should be rigidly enforced where people will stand it, and gingerly handled elsewhere. But I answered militantly; [sic] that as long as I was responsible the law should be enforced up to the handle every where; fearlessly and honestly."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 80; cf, also 99, 104, 118.

7 Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 304. Back in the Police Board days Roosevelt once reported to Lodge that "Lauterbach, the Chairman of our City campaign Committee, has . . . read me out of the party." Lodge, Correspondence, I, 188.

cause of his war record.<sup>8</sup> Although in his letters to Lodge he professed scepticism regarding the permanence of his present popularity, there is little doubt that he intended to use it for all it might be worth. He

was careful, however, to let the New York leaders know that he was subject to persuasion on the governorship. When the Miami dropped anchor off Montauk, he declined to commit himself, but a few days later inspired dispatches from the Rough Riders camp indicated that Roosevelt would listen to the voice of the people. It is doubtful whether he seriously considered declining the nomination.<sup>9</sup>

It would be interesting to know exactly what Roosevelt was thinking at this time while the Rough Riders waited to be mustered out. He knew that an offer of the nomination for governor would probably come from the Republican organization, i.e. from Senator Platt.<sup>10</sup> What should he do if it did come?

On the one hand were the memories of the Police Board years. His appointment to that post had been possible only because Mayor Strong had dismissed from the board the two Republican members who were Platt's men, Michael Kerwin and Charles

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8 Cf. Ibid., 316, 319, 320.

9 Pringle, Roosevelt, 202.

10 Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 304, says that Benjamin B. Odell, then chairman of the Republican State Committee, without Platt's knowledge had written a letter to Roosevelt in Cuba. He had suggested that the Colonel's "chances for the nomination seemed good if he carefully avoided political complications in his interviews and utterances."

H. Murray. Platt, however, claimed that he had written proof, which he included in his Autobiography,<sup>11</sup> that Strong had solemnly promised that "under no circumstances would Murray and Kerwin be removed."<sup>12</sup> Roosevelt's appointment, then, had been bad enough, but it was only the beginning. As we saw in Chapter I, the new commissioner took his reform work very seriously. Nothing, we are told, could have been

more fatal to Platt's intrigues . . . . Platt's anger was shown by his attempt to pass a law vesting the work of reorganizing the New York police department in the governor. He had to console himself, however, with efforts to neutralize Roosevelt's influence. This was done by bringing "pressure" upon Grant [Roosevelt's fellow-commissioner, a Republican] to deadlock the board and by persuading the governor not to remove the Democratic commissioner who was doing his best to perpetuate the old system.<sup>13</sup>

How well the Republican boss succeeded is abundantly clear from Roosevelt's letters to Lodge from 1895 to 1897. The following extracts are samples: "Platt succeeds in identifying himself with the worst men and the worst forces in every struggle, so that a decent man must oppose him." (May, 1895.) "The Platt machine people are wholly impossible." (September, 1895.) "The Platt machine people, especially in this City, are on the

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11 272-292.

12 Ibid., 293.

13 Gosnell, Boss Platt, 230-231.



verge of open war with me." (October, 1895.) In December, 1895:

Nothing ever done by Tammany . . . in the way of fraudulent management of primaries and of stuffing and padding the district associations has surpassed what Platt has been doing recently. . . . I am getting seriously alarmed about the danger from Platt's utter unscrupulousness and cynical indifference to the welfare [sic] of the party.<sup>14</sup>

Could Roosevelt, the fearless opponent (in 1895) of all corruption in politics, now (in 1898) become Platt's candidate for governor?

In February, 1896, the righteous Police Commissioner had again assailed Platt in a letter to the sympathetic Lodge. "The absolutely cynical disregard of decency of Platt and his followers can hardly be imagined." Then he recounted two instances of shameless fraud on the part of Platt's machine in winning the recent primary election. Towards the end of the letter, Roosevelt sums up his case against the Boss by saying: "I quite sincerely believe Platt to be as bad a man as Hill, Murphy or Croker, and just so long as the party is under his domination it is no better than the old ring of Democracy that we overthrew."<sup>15</sup> Needless to say, the party was as much or more under Platt's domination in 1898 as in 1896.

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<sup>14</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 144, 173, 181, 188, 198.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 213. Hill was the Democratic boss of the State of New York; Croker was the Tammany leader in New York City; Murphy was one of the latter's more notorious lieutenants.

Later, while in the Navy Department at Washington, Roosevelt had written (November, 1897):

New York will be all right again in 1898, even if Platt keeps in power, provided we have to fight Bryanism (although the hatred of the Platt machine inspired among decent people is so intense that the State will offer some pretty hard fighting under any conditions if it [the Platt machine] retains power.)<sup>16</sup>

Did the Rough Rider Colonel remember these words in August, 1898, when the same Platt machine was about to make him its candidate? Could he possibly permit himself to represent such a group? Should he not rather seek the nomination independently of the wicked machine?<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand there was another phase of the Roosevelt record about which he might have been thinking while marking time in the Rough Rider camp on Long Island. Ever since the critical year of 1884 when he became a "professional politician" and "regular" Republican, as distinguished from the Mugwumps,<sup>18</sup> he was forced to recognize the "organization" whether local, state or national, as the de facto power in political

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>17</sup> The Independents actually offered Roosevelt their nomination on September 9.

<sup>18</sup> The term applied to those who bolted the Republican Party in 1884 because of Blaine's nomination. Roosevelt's "hatred of the Mugwumps lasted through life. They became, in his eyes, futile and wrong-headed, even effeminate."--Pringle, Roosevelt, 68.

life. One had to deal with it; to break with it meant closing the door of political success in one's own face. Therefore it became part of Roosevelt's philosophy to work with the machine not only as a means to his own advancement, but as the only practical way he could accomplish anything in public affairs. It is important to keep this in mind; otherwise, in the light of his words quoted above, the account below of his dealings with Platt and the machine will not make sense. Roosevelt was honest in his hatred of "corruption" in politics, but he was sensible enough to see that he would not be able to eliminate from public life all "corrupt" men.<sup>19</sup> "Do the best you can" could have been his work-a-day rule.

So he had allowed Platt's machine (still in its early stages of growth) to nominate him for mayor in 1886, and though the immediate results were disastrous, he at least established himself more firmly as a "regular." In 1888 he worked actively for Harrison's election, knowing that Platt was doing the same. In 1891, when he was Civil Service Commissioner and an election for Governor of New York was approaching, Roosevelt wrote to Lodge in August his opinion of the Republican candidate, J. Sloat Fassett: "a good man, but a mere mouthpiece of Platt."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For Roosevelt, corruption in general seemed to give the idea of a man making money dishonestly from politics.

<sup>20</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 117.

This, however, did not prevent Roosevelt two months later from writing in his capacity as part of the national administration a letter for publication on behalf of Fassett's campaign. This action drew a scathing editorial from the New York World. He was charged with having

written a letter in Fassett's behalf stuffed full of lies and misrepresentations.

And this while every Federal employee in this city has received a circular demanding that tribute be paid for party purposes to a political committee of which Postmaster Van Cott<sup>21</sup> and Collector Hendricks are members.

Mr. Roosevelt has not a word to say of this open and defiant violation of the law. He is here to aid the men who are trampling it under foot.

The Democratic House should refuse to vote one dollar to pay the expenses of the Civil Service Commission while this ranting young humbug is a member of it. He has made the very name of reform redolent of hypocrisy.<sup>22</sup>

Particularly significant is the statement Roosevelt made to Lodge in reference to this editorial: "I am rather pleased with the latter editorial; it prevents there being any doubt as to my position."<sup>23</sup> It is clear from the context that by his "position" he meant a cordial co-operation with the Republican or-

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21 Two and a half years before this editorial was written, Roosevelt had written Lodge: "We are threatened with a real calamity here, for I learn that Harrison thinks of making an ordinary ward politician, Van Cott, a Platt henchman, postmaster; a horrible contrast to Pearson. It would be an awful black eye to the party here; a criminal blunder."--Ibid., 76.

22 Ibid., 120-121.

23 Ibid.; italics mine.

ganization.<sup>24</sup>

Even during the troublesome years on the Police Board, when there was "almost open war" between Roosevelt and the Platt men, both sides took great care that the war should not become open. In October, 1895, when another election was pending, Roosevelt wrote Lodge that he had "never alluded to Platt or any of his henchmen in any speech this summer," in spite of all that he felt and privately wrote about those individuals.<sup>25</sup> This effort was almost too much for his fighting spirit. A few days later he told Lodge: "I have so far, with no little self-command, refrained from hitting at any of the Republican people; but after the election is over, I am far from certain that I shall keep my hands off them." This last threat so alarmed Lodge, who was abroad at the time, that he cabled his fiery young friend from Paris: "That I would not have you do for the world." The chastened Theodore promptly replied: "All right! I won't attack any one."<sup>26</sup> And Platt, on his side, was ever faith-

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<sup>24</sup> His action here seems to have been entirely in accordance with a principle he had enunciated to Lodge two years earlier. "I am a great believer in practical politics; but when my duty is to enforce a law, that law is surely going to be enforced, without fear or favor."--Ibid., 80. Since he was not now enforcing the law in New York, it would seem, its violation there did not have to be his concern!

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 189, 197, 196.



ful to his basic principle of party harmony at all costs--at least on the surface. Even Roosevelt recognized this, for he informed Lodge in August, 1895, that he believed Platt was trying to keep on good terms with him.<sup>27</sup>

After the elections that fall everyone's attention turned towards the national convention of the following June. Lodge and Roosevelt were desirous that House Speaker Thomas B. Reed, a close mutual friend, should get the Republican nomination. Roosevelt, therefore, thought it best to join forces with Platt in support of New York Governor Levi Morton, because Morton's chances seemed small, and Platt's second choice would probably be Reed.<sup>28</sup> Roosevelt realized that in this way he could do more for his candidate than by bolting the organization and looking for other Reed delegates. In December he was trying indirectly to arrange a meeting with Platt. He succeeded, and in January wrote to Lodge: "I had a very interesting conference with Platt, . . . We got along very well, in an entirely pleasant and cold-blooded manner."<sup>29</sup> From that time on Roosevelt's letters reveal a constant effort to maintain and increase harmony with the organization. "We must not have a split now; and I

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27 Ibid., 167.

28 Ibid., 203, 204.

29 Ibid., 210.

have to put up with all sorts of compromises in order to avoid it."<sup>30</sup> This even led him, in the ultimate interest of Reed, to team up with "the Platt men" against the pro-McKinley allies of Mayor Strong.<sup>31</sup> This new division became more pronounced as the months rolled by. In July, after McKinley's nomination, Roosevelt worked hard to patch things up between Platt and Mark Hanna.<sup>32</sup> Finally in August, with a governor to be elected in the fall and with a split of the party threatening because of the opposition to Platt and his methods, the Rooseveltian tirades were now being directed against that opposition: "I have again had to make a break with some of the anti-Platt people; they are such fools! . . . The anti-Platt people behave with such folly that they are apt to oppose quite as strenuously a decent fellow whom Platt supports, as the worst scoundrel."<sup>33</sup> In these political vagaries and shifting currents are found the proof that

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30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 216.

32 "As for matters here, he [Hanna] evidently feels rather sore with Platt, and not inclined to call on Platt first; while Platt foolishly stands on a point of punctilio in refusing to make the first advance. I am going to send an urgent request to him today through Quigg to see Hanna by all means."--Ibid., 226.

33 Ibid., 231-232. He wrote Lodge again the following month that though the organization "had frowned on" his speaking at an outside meeting, when its success was seen they quickly asked him to speak for them; "and I of course answered that I would."--Ibid. *Italics mine.*

expediency lay at the root of Roosevelt's practical principles.

November, 1896, brought the Republican landslide in state and nation and with it Roosevelt's chance to "go up higher" into the Navy Department at Washington. He keenly desired the promotion, but Senator Platt's approval was a necessary prerequisite for obtaining it. Roosevelt's efforts now to secure that approval in the light of all he had been saying (privately) about Platt before, are almost pathetic.

It was evident that to wring from the Easy Boss an endorsement of the obnoxious Police Commissioner would require a struggle. Senator Lodge began the fight on December 7 by telephoning Platt, to sound him out; then he advised his friend to call on the Boss. "If I were you, I would see him." The fearsome Police Commissioner's immediate answer was: "I shall write Platt at once to get an appointment to see him." The shrewd Boss had made no promises to Lodge, but expressed the hope that if Roosevelt did get the appointment he would not "make war on" himself--"or, as he put it, on the organization." Roosevelt meekly asserted: "Of course I should not go into the Department to make war on Platt. . . . I would not allow the patronage to be used for any such purpose."<sup>34</sup>

Pringle describes at length the next condition re-

quired by Platt. The only opposition to the latter's candidacy for the United States Senate came from Joseph H. Choate, who "had been among Roosevelt's supporters since the very beginning of his career." Platt did not demand Roosevelt's open support, but only his neutrality. "On the night of December 16, 1896, . . . Roosevelt attended a 'harmony' dinner at which it was agreed that Platt could have the New York Senatorship."<sup>35</sup> The next day Roosevelt wrote: "We had an exceedingly pleasant dinner at Witherbee's. . . . Platt was exceedingly polite."<sup>36</sup> This second condition, too, was fulfilled. "I refused to speak at the Choate meeting," Lodge was informed ten days later. Then Roosevelt added, "of course if I have to declare, I shall be for Choate against Platt." And his reason? ". . . for the feeling about Platt is ugly."<sup>37</sup> What a change from the "good old days"--the fighting days of the previous year when nothing bad enough could be said, in private, about Boss Platt! The latter had not changed. There was no let-up in his obstructionist tactics against Roosevelt's work on the Police Board and there would not be for the next four months. But the Assistant Secretaryship of the Navy hung in the balance, and, it

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<sup>35</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 169. He cites the New York Herald of December 16, 1897.

<sup>36</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 248.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 249.

seems, hardly any price was too great to pay.<sup>38</sup>

Still Platt withheld his approval. In January he obtained the Senatorship, and to five hundred Republicans gathered at Albany for a dinner in his honor the new Senator addressed a few words. So we find Roosevelt reporting to Lodge on January 30: "I wrote Platt telling him how much I approved his speech at Albany, except on the Cuban question."<sup>39</sup> Towards the end of March, at Lodge's direction, Roosevelt solicited the support of Health Officer Doty and District Attorney Olcott, two Platt men whom he had supported for their respective offices. At his request these men visited Platt to urge his approval of the Navy job for Roosevelt. The latter learned two days later that Lauterbach and Quigg had been doing the same.<sup>40</sup> Finally the approval was given, and Roosevelt was appointed.

His thoughts, therefore, about Platt and the machine in the summer of 1898 can easily be deduced. "Practical politics" was his guide. Co-operation, even with men whose methods

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<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to note a change in Roosevelt's letters during these last four months of the Police Board work. His endless complaints to Lodge and to his sister about all the opposition he had to endure, continued; but Platt was no longer the villain. Now it was the "treacherous" Parker, and the "weak, foolish" Grant, two of his fellow-commissioners. Yet these two had not suddenly changed, either. They were, as before, the instruments Platt used to embarrass the unruly Roosevelt.

<sup>39</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 252.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 260, 262.

he disliked, was not difficult when it helped him achieve his purposes. His ambition drove him towards the highest political position within his power of attainment. He would certainly not let antipathy to Platt's machine, based on moral considerations, be an obstacle on the road to the Presidency.<sup>41</sup>

On August 19, 1896, Congressman Lemuel E. Quigg was sent by Platt to sound out Colonel Roosevelt on the subject of a nomination. The New York Tribune next morning noted only that Quigg had made the visit, that neither man had any comment, and that Quigg was seen later in the day talking to Senator Platt in the Oriental Hotel. Rumors were spreading.<sup>42</sup> Roosevelt and Platt both describe this interview in their autobiographies. Platt's account is certainly inaccurate:

I sent Lemuel Ely Quigg . . . to sound the colonel about running for Governor. Mr. Quigg found the colonel more than pleased with the suggestion. When Quigg plumped at Roosevelt the question: "Would you accept the Republican nomination for Governor?" there was no hesitation in the answer.

Like cracks from a rifle, the gallant colonel came back with: "Would I? I would be delighted!"

"Then count upon Senator Platt's support. Come to the Fifth Avenue Hotel and see him," was Quigg's reply.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Roosevelt was bothered by thoughts of the Presidency at least as early as 1895. Cf. Pringle, Roosevelt, 154.

<sup>42</sup> New York Tribune, August 20, 1898.

<sup>43</sup> Platt, Autobiography, 368-369. A great mass of evidence makes it practically certain that Platt by no means freely chose or gladly accepted Roosevelt. Besides the latter's

Roosevelt's version of the meeting goes into greater detail, and is generally accepted as substantially correct.<sup>44</sup> Quigg did come to sound out the Colonel and not to offer the nomination. The organization wanted an assurance that he would not, if nominated and elected, "make war," but would co-operate by consulting with the party leaders on appointments and legislation. No "deals" were made, no promises exacted. The Colonel had no difficulty in reaching an understanding acceptable to the machine, and Quigg's report to his chief was favorable.

What were the results of this feeler? For Roosevelt it became clear that his chances of getting machine support were greatly increased. His only duty now, while he remained in camp, was to be discreet in all his utterances and otherwise to "lie low."<sup>45</sup> Platt for his part adopted a course of "watchful waiting." This period shows with great clarity the nature of his leadership. As we have seen, neither Governor Black nor

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testimony, there is that of Chauncey Depew and Lemuel Quigg. Cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt, 99, nn. 14 and 16; Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 304; Pringle, Roosevelt, 201; Bishop, Roosevelt and His Time, I, 109.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. his Autobiography, 270-272. Gosnell, Pringle, Bishop and Alexander all base their accounts on this version.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Odell's advice to Roosevelt in Cuba, page 32 above, n. 10. In September the latter wrote Lodge: "I am being as circumspect as possible and am trying to commit as few mistakes as possible," the ideal course of action for one hoping to be nominated.--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 346.

Colonel Roosevelt was thoroughly acceptable to the Boss;<sup>46</sup> yet as the end of August drew near, it became increasingly evident that they were the only two serious possibilities for the nomination. As Black wanted a second term and had some strong organizational support, and since the demand for Roosevelt was growing and came from county leaders in all parts of the State,<sup>47</sup> the Senator could not openly favor either man without endangering party harmony. He therefore sat tight and kept his finger on the pulse of Republican sentiment throughout the State. In his statements to the press he said that he wanted only to discover the desires of the Republican rank and file.<sup>48</sup>

Trouble, however, had already begun for the trouble-hating Easy Boss. The day after Quigg visited Roosevelt in camp a rumor was reported from Washington, according to which Quigg said that the Colonel was Senator Platt's choice for governor.<sup>49</sup> Platt immediately issued a denial, but the damage had been done. Governor Black, who felt he was entitled to another

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<sup>46</sup> Gosnell says that Black, while Governor, had "shown his independence by failing to visit Platt at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and during 1897 the relations between the two men were often strained."--Boss Platt, 189.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. New York Tribune, August 27, 29, September 1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ibid., August 29.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., August 20. There had long been enmity between Black and Quigg. Cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt, 97.



term, knew of Quigg's visit to Roosevelt; he knew also that Quigg was Platt's trusted lieutenant. Were they meaning to betray him? If he saw handwriting on the wall he made noble efforts to ignore it. He wanted the renomination, and would fight for it to the very end.

Platt still wanted peace. He travelled from Washington to confer with Black in spite of a recent quarrel which the Governor had provoked.<sup>50</sup> Afterwards he announced that Black would seek a renomination. That same day Quigg publicly retracted, saying that his recent statements favorable to Roosevelt were his private opinions, not the official view of the organization.<sup>51</sup>

So the days wore on. Roosevelt was still in Camp Wickoff, but his boom continued to grow as letters poured in to Republican headquarters calling for his nomination. The twenty-seventh assembly district openly endorsed him. Abraham Gruber, leader in the twenty-first, had a hard time keeping his district from doing the same. Odell was understood to be working "quietly" for the Colonel, while Quigg campaigned more openly. The Republicans of Dobbs Ferry declared for Roosevelt. Albany re-

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<sup>50</sup> The story was that Platt wrote to Albany saying he wanted to see Black, who answered: "You know where to find me if you want me." At this the Boss had said some harsh words against the Governor. Cf. New York Tribune, August 27, 1898.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., August 28, 1898.

ports said that the State Committee found pro-Roosevelt trends all over the State, while support of Governor Black seemed to come only from administration office-holders. Platt was reported as doing a lot of hard thinking, but he still maintained strict neutrality.<sup>52</sup>

In mid-September Roosevelt was finally mustered out of service, and almost immediately he called on Senator Platt at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Odell was also present. All three made statements for the press after the conference. Odell said: "Our talk with Colonel Roosevelt was entirely pleasant and satisfactory. We made no demand for the interview. . . . No conditions of any kind were spoken of at the conference." The Tribune quoted Roosevelt:

"No conditions of any kind were even suggested to me at the conference. Of course I could have consented to no conditions, but there was not even the suggestion of anything of that kind."

Colonel Roosevelt was satisfied that he would have the support of Platt and of the whole Republican organization at the convention.

The Senator's statement, though, was the one that counted:

"I had a satisfactory and interesting interview with Colonel Roosevelt. I found him to be what all knew him to be--a thorough-going Republican."

Senator Platt felt that Roosevelt would stand by the organization in all legitimate party measures, and would consult the leaders of the party on such measures, while he would not be driven to any course

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52 Ibid., from August 27 to September 16.

of action which he thought was wrong.<sup>53</sup>

That settled it. The machine was now officially committed to the nomination of Roosevelt for Governor.

"Apparently," he wrote to Lodge, two days later, "I am going to be nominated. I saw Platt the other day, and had an entirely satisfactory talk. . . . I cannot accept the so-called independent nomination."<sup>54</sup> A group of reformers--what Roosevelt called the silk-stocking variety--had put his name at the head of their State ticket on September 9. In declining their offer a week after seeing Platt, Roosevelt thanked them and expressed the hope that all Independents would support him.

The next task of the organization was to round up a sufficient number of delegates for the State Convention to insure Roosevelt's nomination. As the Colonel was so popular, this did not prove difficult. A week before the convention Odell reported that more than seven hundred delegates would vote for Roosevelt. Platt's next efforts were to persuade Governor Black to withdraw for the sake of an harmonious convention, but he refused, though he must have known he had little chance of victory. His most loyal supporters were Edward Lauterbach and

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., September 18.

<sup>54</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 346.

Louis F. Payn.<sup>55</sup>

The convention was scheduled to begin on Monday, September 26. The preceding Thursday a scare was thrown into the Roosevelt camp when word leaked out that the Colonel was legally ineligible for the office of governor. This complication arose from Roosevelt's residence in Washington while Assistant Secretary of the Navy, together with his desire to avoid paying taxes in New York during the same period. With the help of Elihu Root's legal knowledge and powers of persuasion the delegates to the convention were satisfied that the ineligibility was only apparent.<sup>56</sup> On the first ballot Roosevelt received 753 votes to Black's 218.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt, 101. The New York Tribune on August 31 reported that Payn was "laboring with all his strength to bring about Mr. Black's renomination; . . . pulling all the political wires he can reach in Mr. Black's favor." One of Black's most unpopular acts had been the appointment of Payn as State Superintendent of Insurance. The question of his reappointment by Roosevelt will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>56</sup> As a matter of fact Roosevelt was legally ineligible. Cf. Pringle, Roosevelt, 203-204. This happened, though, through a mere oversight, and he never intended to give up his voting residence in the State, whether at his home in Oyster Bay, Long Island, or the one in New York City.

<sup>57</sup> This did not represent any split of the party since Black had held out only in the hope that Roosevelt would be found ineligible. In the convention Platt's efforts for harmony bore fruit. "There was no wish to humiliate the Governor. In making his statement Root 'deemed it a privilege' to declare the Governor's action as a candidate as 'manly, straightforward, frank, and open as it always had been as a Governor.' In a similar vein the candidates were presented. With compliments for

In the campaign that followed, Roosevelt, Platt and the other organization leaders worked together smoothly and whole-heartedly for the common cause.<sup>58</sup> During the first half of the campaign the Republicans seemed headed for defeat. Even Senator Lodge in Massachusetts was worried about his friend's prospects. "I had begun to get very anxious about the campaign in New York," he wrote on October 19. This was in reply to a letter of Roosevelt dated October 16, in which he listed the reasons for the Republican gloom: the Gold Democrats had returned to Tammany; the Germans were inclined to oppose the former Police Commissioner who three years previously had closed their saloons on Sundays; the Independents opposed Roosevelt the expansionist and militarist; Algerism--Republican mismanagement in the Spanish War<sup>59</sup>--was a heavy load to carry; "Lou" Payn in the Insurance Department and Aldridge with the canals constituted another burden; finally, "there is great apathy

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Black, the brilliant Depew placed Roosevelt in nomination, and with compliments for Roosevelt, the sturdy Saxton presented the Governor's name."--Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 309.

58 "Senator Platt and Congressman Odell are doing all they can for me and I could not wish the canvass to be in better hands; . . . and I am more than satisfied with the way the State canvass is being run."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 356-357.

59 Russell Alger was McKinley's Secretary of War. Roosevelt's and Lodge's letters in the summer of 1898 are filled with blistering criticism of his inefficiency, stupidity and negligence.

among the Republicans."<sup>60</sup>

Richard Croker, the Tammany Boss, saved the day for his political enemies. Early in October he had denied a renomination to the State Supreme Court to Judge J. F. Daly. Then he foolishly "let it be known that Justice Daly had been refused . . . because he had failed to make an appointment in his court recommended by the [Democratic] 'organization.'"<sup>61</sup> This incident shocked the people of New York and became a life-line for the floundering Republican campaign. The managers finally sent Roosevelt out to canvass the State. "Crokerism" became the issue, "An Untrammelled Judiciary" the battlecry. The Colonel of the Rough Riders rode roughshod over the opposition, mercilessly pounding at the evils of Tammany. In lurid colors he painted the dangers that threatened New York if Croker should gain control of the State, as he already controlled the City, by the election of the Democratic candidate, Augustus Van Wyck. (The latter's brother, Robert, Mayor of New York, was considered a mere tool of Croker.) Protest meetings against the Tammany dictator were attended by thousands. New life surged into Republican workers and apathy gave way to enthusiasm.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 356-357.

<sup>61</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 143.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Ibid.; Pringle, Roosevelt, 207; Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 321; Lodge, Correspondence, I, 357-358.

The results? On election day Roosevelt defeated Van Wyck by a very slim margin. In a total of 1,305,636 votes for the two leading candidates, his plurality was 17,794. In contrast, Black's margin of victory two years before had been 212,992.<sup>63</sup>

From these statistics two things become clear. Without the Republican machine Roosevelt could not have been elected,<sup>64</sup> and without Roosevelt the machine would surely have met defeat.<sup>65</sup> A third fact has already been touched on: without Boss Croker neither Roosevelt nor the machine would have won. The memory of their mutual dependence at election time probably helped Roosevelt and Platt to maintain harmony as well as they did during the following two years.

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<sup>63</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 149.

<sup>64</sup> "On November 22, 1898, Roosevelt wrote to Spring Rice: 'I have played it in bull luck this summer. First, to get into the war; and then to get out of it; then to get elected.'" --Pringle, Roosevelt, 207-208, citing Stephen Gwynn, The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice, New York, 1929, 2 vols. I, 271.

<sup>65</sup> Alexander writes: "The convention recognised the party's precarious condition, and while most of the delegates preferred an out-and-out organisation candidate, nearly all conceded that hope of victory depended largely upon Roosevelt's nomination, whose heroic service in the war had captivated the popular imagination."--Four New Yorkers, 309. Even with his narrow margin, Roosevelt was considerably ahead of the rest of the ticket. The other Republican pluralities ranged from eight thousand to fifteen thousand.

## CHAPTER III

### 1899: A YEAR OF STRIFE

Before his nomination Governor Roosevelt had agreed not to "make war" on the Republican organization. He had promised to consult with the party leaders on appointments and legislation. The leaders, on the other hand, had understood that their candidate, if elected, should not be forced to any line of action of which he could not in conscience approve. It is the purpose of the present chapter to investigate the fate of this mutual understanding after the election. The year 1899 is taken to include the period from November, 1898, to February, 1900.

In considering Roosevelt's governorship as a whole it must first be remembered that there was no open break with the organization, no split of the party. Surface harmony, at least, was maintained to the end. To be sure there was a good deal of tugging and straining and political maneuvering nearly all the time. Moreover it was common and public knowledge that the Governor and Senator Platt, apart from their Republicanism, radically differed one from the other in their political tempera-



ment, outlook, principles and morality. It was known that each was dependent on the other for the party success that both desired, and that their union of forces for the common goal represented some compromise on both sides. But the union was kept intact.

There were three instances when the "open war" did break out to some extent. The first involved the appointment of a Superintendent of Public Works. The second was the battle over the Franchise Tax bill. The third was occasioned by the appointment of a Superintendent of Insurance. This last, the famous "Payn fight," came perilously close to causing a real split of the party in New York. These three conflicts, then, will be handled separately, after a preliminary discussion of appointments and legislation in general.

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"Roosevelt," wrote Platt in his autobiography, "had from the first agreed that he would consult me on all questions of appointments, Legislature or party policy. He religiously fulfilled this pledge, although he frequently did just what he pleased."<sup>1</sup> This statement is amply supported by the facts. The Governor very frequently consulted Platt and other leaders in

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1 Platt, Autobiography, 374.

New York, either at the Fifth Avenue Hotel or at the home of Roosevelt's married sister.<sup>2</sup> These conferences were the cause of much criticism, because his enemies among the Independents and reformers took them as proof of his utter subserviency to Boss Platt.<sup>3</sup> His record as Governor, however, completely refutes this charge.

Election day in 1898 was Tuesday, November 8. The following Saturday Roosevelt conferred with the party leaders and afterwards was questioned by reporters. "My object," he told them, "has been to obtain their views and ideas regarding my administration."<sup>4</sup> Ten days later a "harmony dinner" was

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2 The Fifth Avenue Hotel was famous for many years as the headquarters of the New York Republican party. Senator Platt's suite of rooms there was his New York City residence. Downstairs at the end of a broad corridor was the "Amen Corner" where Republican leaders from all over the State met in conference with the Easy Boss. Here was determined much of the party policy--nominations, legislation, and appointments--during the years of Platt's power. Cf. Platt, Autobiography, c. XXIII; Gosnell, Boss Platt, 56-57.

3 After Roosevelt's spectacular victory in the fight over the reappointment of "Lou" Payn, a New York Tribune editorial (January 30, 1900) was entitled: "The Governor's Gain and Loss." His gain, of course, was the confirmation of a new Superintendent of Insurance to succeed Payn. But, thought the Tribune, he has lost prestige and dignity by his frequent, sometimes clandestine trips to New York to confer with the organization leaders. The meetings, if necessary, should have been at Albany. The Tribune was Republican, but thoroughly anti-Platt.

4 Ibid., November 13, 1898.

given at the Metropolitan Club. In the course of his talk, the Governor-elect turned to Platt and said:

Whether or not I can make a success of my administration depends as largely upon you people as it does on me. Either of us can spoil it if we choose to do so. We must sink our prejudices and you must help me to make my administration an honest one.<sup>5</sup>

While such a statement was well calculated to appeal to his hearers and favorably to impress the newspaper readers next day, it would seem that Roosevelt sincerely meant what he said.

During the first week in December he again met Platt, Quigg and Odell, to discuss the appointments that would soon be made. Quigg, in a statement to the press,

admitted later that he and Colonel Roosevelt did not agree as to some of the candidates, but the organizations leaders understand that when they are consulted by the Governor-elect he always reserves the right to accept or reject their opinions, and they do not expect that he will always follow their advice.<sup>6</sup>

This would seem to be a frank and fair enough position for the leaders to take. As a matter of fact it was the public expression of their reaction to Roosevelt's "declaration of Independence" in the Public Works appointment, to be discussed later.

It seems correct to say that in most of his appointments Roosevelt simply co-operated with Platt, for sometimes he would name the men suggested by the Senator, at others he would

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5 Ibid., November 23, 1898.

6 Ibid., December 10.

submit his own choices for Platt's approval. On January 23, 1899, he answered the request of a certain Mason Mitchell:

I am going to find it very difficult to give you that appointment. The organization feels that certain New York men should be appointed, and the men whom they back are men who really ought to be considered.<sup>7</sup>

Another letter under the same date is interesting. A certain J. S. VanDuzer had written to ask a favor, and was told:

I have to do so many things disagreeable to the organization that I want to act on their advice if I can. For instance, in this very matter, I am going to put on a man from New York City who may not be acceptable to them and I want to take a man they recommend from the country.<sup>8</sup>

This quid pro quo method of dealing with the organization was a key principle with Roosevelt, enabling him to remain on good terms both with the machine and with his conscience.<sup>9</sup>

Gosnell quotes some of the Platt-Roosevelt correspondence that was brought to light in the famous Barnes vs. Roosevelt libel suit of 1915.<sup>10</sup> One of these letters will suffice

7 From a letter contained in the Theodore Roosevelt Papers at the Library of Congress, Washington, January, 1899. This collection consists chiefly of the Governor's official correspondence, and will be referred to hereafter as Library of Congress Letters.

8 Ibid.

9 Cf. page 39, above, for more evidence of Roosevelt's use of this principle when he was New York Police Commissioner.

10 William Barnes, Jr., of Albany, had been a young and prominent underling of Boss Platt (cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt,

for our purpose:

March 31, 1899.

Hon. Theo. Roosevelt,  
Executive Chamber, Albany, N. Y.

My dear Governor:

I am in receipt of yours of March 30th. Gelshenen is a first-class man in every respect and I think would be as acceptable as anybody, as a Democratic appointee. I think it would be well moreover, to please Grady.

I find that I have been mistaken with reference to Leopold Stirn. He has no connection whatever with Stirn Brothers family, and is not a relative. Different family entirely. He is a downtown jeweler of wealth and reputation. He was very generous last fall, and therefore Quigg is anxious that he should receive the appointment. So you will excuse me if I change off my mind. . . .

Yours sincerely,

T. C. Platt

To this letter [continues Gosnell] Roosevelt replied on April 1st as follows: "All right I will appoint Stirn and Gelshenen. . . ." When he was questioned with reference to this letter, Roosevelt replied that there were times when he relied entirely upon the knowledge and suggestion of Mr. Platt and that the appointment of Gelshenen was made partly as a matter of pleasing Grady, the leader of the

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c. I.) Later, says Pringle, he was "the successor to Tom Platt and his control of New York was almost as complete." On July 22, 1914, two years after bolting the Republican Party, Roosevelt had occasion to attack the new machine in New York, and in a public statement declared that "Boss Barnes and Boss Murphy of Tammany Hall were corruptly allied." Next day Barnes filed suit for libel. The trial resulted in a verdict declaring Roosevelt's statement truthful. (Roosevelt, 575-577.)

organization Democrats in the legislature.<sup>11</sup>

Examples of how Roosevelt co-operated with the machine abound in his answers to people writing for jobs. Statements like these occur: "I will talk to Senator Platt about you." "I have had your case up with both Mr. Odell and Mr. Quigg." "Senator Platt takes very strongly to your view. . . ." "I wish you would see him [Platt] just as soon as he gets back from Albany. . . ."<sup>12</sup> He made no secret of his efforts to co-operate in this way. In July, 1899, he was interested in securing the reappointment of the postmistress of his home town, Oyster Bay, on Long Island. So he wrote to the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General at Washington: "After conversation with Senator Platt and with his acquiescence, I have the honor to endorse the application of Miss Annie Larrabee for postmistress at Oyster Bay, Nassau County, New York." To Miss Larrabee he wrote: "I saw Senator Platt . . . ." And to William J. Youngs, his secretary, ". . . I have now spoken to Senator Platt as to her being reappointed."<sup>13</sup>

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11 Gosnell, Boss Platt, 212.

12 Library of Congress Letters, March 15, 16 and 30, 1899.

13 Ibid., July 26, 1899. This incident also illustrates the hold which Platt had on federal patronage in New York while McKinley was President. Cf. Gosnell, Boss Platt, 248-261. Platt himself wrote: "President McKinley was the most tender-hearted man I ever met in politics." (Autobiography, 399.)

In the matter, therefore, of ordinary, inconsequential appointments he had to make, Roosevelt co-operated cordially with the party leaders. It was the natural and sensible procedure, and necessary for carrying out the duties of his office. He was able to write to Lodge early in January, 1899, that he continued "to be on excellent terms with the Senator so far as I can find out. He is treating me perfectly squarely and I think he is satisfied that I am treating him the same way."<sup>14</sup>

When it came to the more important appointments, however, the Governor was much more independent. His consuming ambition in this office, as in every other he held, was to do the best possible job. He felt it was his clear duty not to appoint unfit or "corrupt" men to any important positions, but rather to get the best man possible for each of them. This brought him into conflict with Platt more than once. Two important instances were the Public Works and Insurance Departments which will be discussed separately.

There were other, less spectacular clashes. One of these arose in February, 1899, when a surrogate had to be ap-

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<sup>14</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 380. It must be kept in mind that the governor's appointments had to be confirmed by the state senate which had only a very slight Republican majority at this time. Such was Platt's power in the legislature that he could prevent the confirmation of any appointment or the passage of almost any bill. Roosevelt had this fact constantly before his mind. Its importance will be seen again in this chapter.

pointed in New York City. Roosevelt favored a C. H. Beckett; platt objected because Beckett was not a "thorough-going" Republican. When the Governor next suggested J. F. Daly, a Democrat, the Republican leaders disliked him even more, "and said so plainly." At their suggestion, on the other hand, of George C. Austin, Roosevelt declared that he "would not consider a recommendation of him." This impasse remained for several days. The organization then offered several additional names of acceptable men, and finally the Governor chose one of them, General Varnum.<sup>15</sup>

As we have just seen, Roosevelt was willing at times to appoint good Democrats to office; on other occasions he insisted on doing so. Early in December, 1899, it became known that a New York Judge, a Democrat named O'Brien, intended to resign his judgeship. Roosevelt deemed it best to appoint as his successor another Democrat, J. F. Daly. There were also sound political reasons for choosing Daly,<sup>16</sup> but the machine's opposition was strong and immediate. With so many good Repub-

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. New York Tribune, February 5, 8, 16, 1899.

<sup>16</sup> Daly, it will be remembered, was the judge whom Tammany Boss Croker refused to reappoint during the previous campaign. This incident meant the difference between victory and defeat for Roosevelt in the November elections. Since the Republicans made such an issue of Daly's case before election, it would not be strange that they should remember him after their victory.



icans eligible for the judgeship, it was inconceivable to the "regulars" that a Democrat should get the office. Organization support rallied round the Republican, Cohen, and strong pressure was exerted on the Governor; he however was adamant. Platt was forced to resort to a political "move" to prevent Daly's appointment.<sup>17</sup>

Another instance of Roosevelt's willingness to appoint Democrats to office occurred when he decided not to reappoint Goodwin Brown to the State Lunacy Commission, but to replace him by one of his party. The Governor picked William Van Amee to replace him and thereby raised a terrific storm of protest. No one, it seemed, approved the choice.<sup>18</sup> When the name was finally withdrawn, Roosevelt's ostensible reason was that some evi-

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17 "When Roosevelt indicated that he would not be moved, Justice O'Brien changed his mind about resigning. The inference was that Platt had informed Croker of the Governor-elect's decision and the Tammany chief had used his influence to keep Judge O'Brien upon the bench. . . . This was what the politicians called a 'move.' When asked whether he had inspired it, Platt winked wickedly and smiled."--Gosnell, Boss Platt, 207-08; he refers to J. L. Stevens, "Governor Roosevelt," McClure's Magazine, XIII, 63. Cf. New York Tribune, December 6, 8 and 11, 1898. Roosevelt wrote Lodge on December 12: ". . . you probably saw the outcome of the Daly matter. As soon as I announced definitely, that I would appoint Daly, Croker made O'Brien keep on the bench."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 368.

18 The Democrats denounced Van Amee because "he was no longer a Democrat;" the Republicans, because he was too much a Democrat. Cf. New York Times, April 5, 1899.

dence had been adduced to show that Van Amee no longer considered himself a Democrat.<sup>19</sup> William C. Osborne, approved by the organization, was then appointed to the Lunacy board. The New York Times hailed this as a two-fold victory of Roosevelt over the machine.<sup>20</sup>

One more feature of Roosevelt's method in making appointments can be mentioned. If he was "forced," through expediency or by way of compromise, to accept an organization candidate he considered less than ideal, he tried to add deputies of his own choosing. For example, when he appointed as Superintendent of Public Buildings, H. H. Bender, who was strictly a machine man, he named his old friend Joe Murray as assistant. Another instance was the appointment of John McMackin, the organization's candidate for Commissioner of Labor Statistics: as his

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19 The real reason probably was that Roosevelt learned of Van Amee's record only after deciding to appoint him. In 1893 he had made a speech on behalf of Isaac Maynard, a close friend, who was running for Judge of the Court of Appeals. Maynard was notorious for his part in the election frauds of 1891 by which a Democratic state senator was declared elected in Dutchess County. For a complete account of this scandal, cf. Alexander, Four New Yorkers, c. XVIII: "The Theft of a Senator."

20 April 7, 1899. The Times states that the organization first wanted a Republican appointed in Brown's place, and failing in this, they preferred that Brown be retained. It should be remembered that the Times was a Democratic paper, so anxious to see discord among the Republicans that it tended to discover the discord even if it weren't there. Roosevelt undoubtedly erred in first naming Van Amee, and his subsequent appointment of Osborne was not much of a victory over the machine.

deputy Roosevelt picked Adna Weber, whom the Governor knew personally.<sup>21</sup>

When it was a matter of legislation, co-operation was again the guiding principle. Every administration wants to have some good legislation passed to which it can point with pride in the next elections. In addition Roosevelt was determined to give the people good government while he was in office. His fight for the Franchise Tax bill will be seen in detail. There were other bills which he helped through the Legislature by his support.<sup>22</sup> One especially should be noted, the Civil Service Reform bill.

Governor Black had incurred great unpopularity by drafting and pushing through an unwilling legislature his

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. New York Tribune, January 18, 1899. Of Murray Roosevelt wrote: "He was by nature as straight a man, as fearless and as staunchly loyal, as any one whom I have ever met, a man to be trusted in any position demanding courage, integrity, and good faith."--Autobiography, 59. This Murray was the one who arranged Roosevelt's first nomination to the New York Assembly, 1881: "... it was to him that I owe my entry into politics." (Ibid., 60.) Cf. above, page 13.

<sup>22</sup> One of the constitutional powers the Governor had over pending legislation was the special message. By this procedure he could bring any specified bill out of committee, even ahead of its turn, for a vote by the assemblymen or senators. The bill was thereby saved from being "buried alive" in the committee-room, and the legislators were forced by the open vote to commit themselves before their constituents. Roosevelt frequently used the special message on bills he wanted passed.

"starchless" civil service bill.<sup>23</sup> This was a blot on the escutcheon of the party which Roosevelt was particularly anxious to remove. Could he win enough backing from the organization to get a good bill passed? On March 6, 1899, the New York Tribune noted that "the Republican machine is not showing any interest in the bills relating to these subjects [civil service reform and primary election reform,] and it is no wonder they make no progress."

Some time later Roosevelt went to work on behalf of the bill, and his efforts produced fruit. On March 31 he wrote to Rev. T. R. Slicer:

We have made a big gain in the civil service fight. . . . But you have no conception of the difficulties I have had to contend with, and I want to express my great obligations to Senator Platt and Mr. Odell for the way they stood by me. It was unexpected and was literally invaluable.<sup>24</sup>

Organization pressure was now being used in favor of the bill, and it passed the Senate on April 12.

In the Assembly, however, the danger arose of the measure being buried in committee.<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt acted immediate-

<sup>23</sup> Before his election Black had expressed himself in favor of civil service with "less starch" in it; i.e. he wanted civil service rules lax enough to permit the machine to strengthen its position by an increased amount of patronage. Cf. Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 288.

<sup>24</sup> Library of Congress Letters, March, 1899.

<sup>25</sup> This may have been part of a scheme of the machine

ly. By a special message to the legislature he made sure that the bill would be voted on, while his newspaper conferences helped advertise the Governor's stand and kept the people of the State interested. If necessary, he was willing to call a special session of the legislature to get the bill passed. The pressure of popular support made itself felt, and the Assembly approved the measure on April 19.<sup>26</sup>

The Times felt that the substitute of this measure for Black's civil service law was the one important accomplishment of the whole session.

How Governor Roosevelt succeeded in getting so radical a reform bill through a machine Legislature passes understanding. It is a deed that resounds prodigiously to the credit of his righteous principles, his courage, and his energy. The more the machine studies the new law the less it will like it and the more it will dislike the Governor for driving it through to enactment.<sup>27</sup>

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leaders--to declare their support of the bill and ostentatiously help get it through the Senate, and then quietly let it die in an Assembly committee. Such seems to have been the procedure with the Franchise Tax bill, as will be seen.

26 New York Tribune, April 12, 14 and 19, 1899. "Governor Roosevelt was not only an able and forceful speaker upon the public platform but he also understood the art of blazonry and knew how to make every newspaper man his publicity agent."--Gosnell, Boss Platt, 187. This was the chief means he had for going "over the heads" of the machine leaders to appeal to the people.

27 New York Times, April 29, 1899.

Gosnell expresses the opinion that Platt favored this bill which put "starch" back into New York's civil service, probably "to please Roosevelt and to inconvenience Tammany, rather than from a fundamental change of heart."<sup>28</sup>

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We have shown how important the canals were in the New York election of 1898. Because of them Roosevelt only narrowly missed defeat. In his campaign he had promised a full investigation into the "frauds," removal and punishment of offending officials, and an honest administration of the canal system during his governorship. This explains the added importance which was then attached to the office of Superintendent of Public Works--the canals were under his jurisdiction. George W. Aldridge was Superintendent when Roosevelt was elected, but wisely resigned soon after that event. The question of his successor in the biggest job the Governor could offer<sup>29</sup> excited the greatest interest and speculation.

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<sup>28</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 238. He adds a footnote: "This is the writer's interpretation. By the time Roosevelt became governor, most of the political workers had been 'placed.' Civil service rules might have helped to keep them in."

<sup>29</sup> "In the actual state of affairs," Roosevelt wrote, "his office was by far the most important office under me, and I intended to appoint to it some man of high character and capacity who could be trusted to do the work not merely honestly and efficiently, but without regard to politics."--Autobiography, 284.

Roosevelt afterward wrote that Platt called him to a conference not long after the election and told him that the new Superintendent would be Francis J. Hendricks of Syracuse, who had just wired his acceptance. Roosevelt continued:

I told the Senator very politely that I was sorry, but that I could not appoint his man. This produced an explosion, but I declined to lose my temper, merely repeating that I must decline to accept any man chosen for me, and that I must choose the man myself. Although I was very polite, I was also very firm, and Mr. Platt and his friends finally abandoned their position.<sup>30</sup>

There is possibly some grain of truth in this story, but it must be a small one. The conference undoubtedly took place, since the newspapers reported several meetings of Roosevelt with Platt at the Fifth Avenue Hotel during November.<sup>31</sup> There is, moreover, no reason to doubt that Platt told the Governor-elect that Hendricks was the organization's choice for Superintendent of Public Works, for the newspapers, again, announced this fact on December 1.<sup>32</sup>

The rest of Roosevelt's account would seem to be imaginative coloring added after fifteen years.<sup>33</sup> Probably he

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30 Ibid., 285.

31 Cf. New York Tribune, November, 1898.

32 Ibid.

33 When Roosevelt wrote his life in 1913, he was already the "ideal American," the hero of millions who thought he could do--and could have done--no wrong. When, therefore, he

balked at accepting Hendricks and in his place seems to have suggested a George Clinton.<sup>34</sup> On December 1 he wrote Lodge that he might have to accept Hendricks; the matter was still doubtful. "Clinton, who says he would under no circumstances take the place, has written a very strong protest against him [Hendricks]." Five days later he wrote: "The Daly matter [cf. page 62 above] has rather complicated matters, and may result in my appointing Hendricks."<sup>35</sup> This certainly does not sound like a man who recently delivered an ultimatum to Platt concerning the appointment of Hendricks!

On the twelfth of December Lodge was informed that his friend had offered the Public Works appointment to General Frank V. Greene, but "I very much fear he cannot accept. I shall very possibly have to take Hendricks; but I shall try Roberts who is sufficiently better to justify a fight."<sup>36</sup> The latter was James

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came to describe incidents of his career, I think he looked back and saw the event as it should have happened, and himself speaking and acting in the way his devoted admirers wanted to believe that he spoke and acted.

<sup>34</sup> Senator Lodge saw Platt in Washington towards the end of November. On the thirtieth he wrote to Roosevelt: "... assuming that Hendricks is a man of fair ability and good character his appointment would be on the whole the best solution." He thought "there was not enough difference between him and Clinton to make a sufficient ground for a serious contest."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 363-364.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 365-366.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 368-369.



A. Roberts, who had been State Comptroller the previous year and was largely instrumental in uncovering the canal frauds. Alexander states simply that Roosevelt preferred him for the post.<sup>37</sup>

Roberts declined the offer on December 20. The next day Roosevelt wrote Lodge that his reluctance to appoint Hendricks was increasing. Many of the latter's subordinates had been singled out "for especial criticism" by the recent investigating committee.

For this and for other reasons connected with Hendricks' extreme subserviency to the Machine, in for instance, coming to Albany to do everything he could for Lou Payne's [sic]<sup>38</sup> appointment, etc., etc., I feel that if I can get some better man, I should try. Frank Greene is wavering.<sup>39</sup>

General Greene would have been an ideal man for the job but he had to decline it, the papers reporting his final refusal on December 29.<sup>40</sup>

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37 Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 326; 302.

38 These published letters have the name of "Lou" Payn consistently misspelled as above. There were at least two prominent Republicans of that period who spelled their names with the e: Henry C. Payne, of Wisconsin, a Postmaster-General under President Roosevelt, and Sereno Payne, well-known in New York State politics. The editor of the Lodge-Roosevelt correspondence probably erred by changing the "Payn" in the originals.

39 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 371.

40 New York Tribune. The day before, the Tribune had reported that Platt, Joseph Choate, Seth Low and Elihu Root, in addition to Roosevelt, had been pressing Greene to accept. Lodge was told on December 27 how disappointed Roosevelt was that Greene would not accept. "It would have been the ideal so-

Another man to be considered was Colonel John M. Partridge. Platt assured the Governor-elect that the organization in King's County (Brooklyn) "would be pleased" with the Colonel's appointment. Henry H. Lyman had also been sounded out, but his refusal came on January 1.<sup>41</sup> Finally the appointment was made. After an inquiry showed Roosevelt that Partridge was also acceptable to the "anti-machine people" of Brooklyn, his name was sent to the Senate. It should be noted that the Governor was not exactly elated over his final choice. "I have secured a good and upright Superintendent of Public Works," he wrote Lodge on the day Partridge's name went to the Senate, "who is acceptable to all Republicans, but I do not think he is a very strong man." Nevertheless the appointment was confirmed four days later, January 16, 1899.<sup>42</sup>

What conclusion can be drawn from all this? First, Roosevelt refused to appoint as Superintendent of Public Works the man nominated by the machine. To persevere in his resolve he had to withstand a good deal of pressure, and was forced to

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lution, especially as the appointment would have been particularly acceptable to Platt."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 376.

<sup>41</sup> New York Tribune, December 31 and January 2.

<sup>42</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 380, 384. New York Tribune, January 13 and 17, 1899.

search for a capable man who would take the post.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, he was careful to get the machine's approval of the man finally chosen, since this was necessary if he wanted the Senate to confirm his appointment. There seems to be no evidence of any hard feelings on either side as the result of this conflict.

## 3

In mid-February, 1899, State Senator John Ford introduced his bill providing for a tax on public service franchises. Large corporations, such as the street railway companies in New York and the larger upstate cities, had secured valuable holdings from their municipalities, and it was thought by many that these corporations were not bearing a just share of the public tax burden. Ford's bill, then, would tax their franchises as real estate. On February 17 the measure began to attract notice in the newspapers. As the corporations at whom the bill was aimed happened to be among the largest contributors to political campaign funds, the organization leaders of neither party wanted the measure to become law. Ordinarily that would have settled the matter. To get a bill through both houses of the legislature when the leaders of both organizations opposed it,

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<sup>43</sup> "The more I look into the place, the more I realize that at this crisis, good work cannot be done by the ordinary party 'hack', even of the best type; and the really high-class men will not take it."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 376.

would be something of a political miracle.

Ford's bill, however, seemed to have found some backers in the legislature. Their efforts to get the bill reported out of committee made enough noise to hold newspaper attention, so that articles frequently appeared reporting the bill's progress--or lack of it. Finally Governor Roosevelt's interest was aroused, and on March 19 he publicly stated his approbation of a tax on public service franchises.<sup>44</sup> The organization was not alarmed. As in the well-known cat-skinning operation, there was more than one way to kill a bill.

By the end of March Roosevelt had sent a special message to the legislature on tax reform, in which he called specifically for the taxing of franchises. On April 8 the New York Times noted that the Governor now favored the Ford bill by name. Three days later the Senate passed the measure. If friends of the bill were gladdened by this news, their joy was short-lived, for it quickly developed that the action of the Senate was only part of a plan to defeat the bill. Its backers began

to suspect that the Republican machine does not sympathize with Governor Roosevelt's indorsement of the measure and that, disliking to oppose openly an evidently popular idea, it is resorting to the time-honored device of passing the bill in one House with all the Republicans on record for it, and choking it

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<sup>44</sup> New York Tribune, March 19, 1899.

in committee in the other.<sup>15</sup>

Convincing proof of this was found in the fact that even the Tammany Hall organization favored the measure; believing that it would not pass, they wanted to go on record as ardent supporters of what by now was a thoroughly popular bill.

Roosevelt rose to the occasion. On April 15 a headline in the Tribune read: "Roosevelt Its Friend--Governor Champions the Ford Franchise Tax Bill--His Espousal of Its Cause May Defeat the Apparent Plot to Bury It in Committee." Whenever he began to "champion" something, his opponents could be sure at least of having a fight on their hands. The Times was not so optimistic. It expected the bill to be defeated, and was already placing the blame for this squarely on the shoulders of the Republican organization.

Perhaps the machine leaders felt that the publicity would defeat this scheme, so within a week they were trying another. The Assembly, instead of voting on the Ford bill, was to pass a slightly different bill of its own which would then be sent to the Senate for action.<sup>16</sup> This would cause delay sufficient to strangle both bills, for the end of the session was

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<sup>15</sup> New York Times, April 14.

<sup>16</sup> New York Tribune, April 20.

in sight.<sup>47</sup> As April 28 approached, the last day of the session, the papers became more clamorous in denouncing the evil success of the machine, success which seemed assured.<sup>48</sup> April 27 came and the bill still reposed in its committee-coffin, with the lid ready to be nailed down. Late in the day a special message came from the Governor calling for a vote on the measure. Rather than have the message read the organization leaders in the Assembly adjourned abruptly.<sup>49</sup> It was eight in the evening, and only a half-day of the session remained.

Early the next morning Roosevelt learned what had happened and immediately he sent another special message. He claims he instructed Youngs, his secretary, to inform the Speaker that if there were any further delay he would come to read the message in person.<sup>50</sup> Under these blows the opposition col-

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<sup>47</sup> The talk of "schemes" and "plots" to defeat the Franchise Tax bill was not idle speculation. Immediately after the substitute bill was introduced in the Assembly, G. A. Stoneman, a member of the committee which had charge of Ford's message, told newspapermen: "It will be understood now why I did not help vote the Ford bill out of our committee. The organization did not want the Ford bill. . . ."--Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> The Tribune's headlines were typical of that day. "Strangling the Ford Bill--Increasing Evidence That the Machine Means to Kill It." (April 21.) "Foul Blow At Ford Bill. . . ." (April 26.)

<sup>49</sup> Roosevelt claimed that the Speaker, Fred S. Nixon, "actually tore up" the message.--Autobiography, 302.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

lapsed. The vote was taken and the bill passed, 104-38. The newspapers next day justly hailed this as a great Roosevelt victory. If, as was true, an aroused public opinion had been the power that forced the legislature to pass the Franchise Tax bill, yet the Governor had marshalled that opinion and made it effective.<sup>51</sup>

Gosnell states that "the organization leaders were stunned" by what had happened;<sup>52</sup> victory had changed into defeat so suddenly. But they began immediately to salvage what they could from the ruins. With representatives of the corporations they pointed out to Roosevelt some real defects in the Ford bill and prevailed upon him to call an extra session of the legislature, that a new measure might be passed. This he did.<sup>53</sup>

This conflict on the Franchise Tax bill undoubtedly strained the relations between the Governor and the organization leaders. The New York Times noted on May 19 that Roosevelt's conference with Platt, to discuss the approaching extra session,

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51 New York Times, and Tribune, April 29, 1899.

52 Boss Platt, 198.

53 Cf. New York Times, May 23 and 26. Roosevelt's account of machine intrigues during the extra session may contain some truth. "Efforts were tentatively made to outwit me, by inserting amendments that would nullify the effect of the law, or by withdrawing the law when the Legislature convened; which would have deprived me of the whip hand."--Autobiography, 303.

was the first meeting of the two in over a month. Roosevelt on the one hand must have been disgusted with the underhanded methods used by the machine to smother the Ford bill, while on the other his violent counter-attack and its success could scarcely have increased his popularity with the bosses.

Platt seems to have been genuinely alarmed when the Ford bill was passed. This was probably due, as Gosnell suggests, to "visions of disappearing campaign funds"--funds which the offended corporations would henceforth be slow to contribute.<sup>54</sup> Another reason for fear was the power which Democratic Tammany Hall would gain under the provisions of the Franchise measure. Platt wrote to Roosevelt that the Ford bill,

shot into the heart of the business community out of a clear sky, worked by Tammany Hall for political and individual plunder is a bad thing and I sincerely believe that you will make the mistake of your life if you allow the bill to become a law. With a political experience that runs back nearly half a century I do not hesitate to predict that the signing of this bill, with the tremendous power it conveys to the Tammany assessors, will give New York to the Democratic party in 1900.<sup>55</sup>

Then the Senator asked for the special session of the legislature when he saw that Roosevelt would not veto the Ford bill, and he made the improved version a strictly party measure, which

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<sup>54</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 198.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.; the quotation is from a Platt letter to Roosevelt published in the Barnes vs. Roosevelt libel suit, 2368.



insured its being driven through both houses.<sup>56</sup> When this was accomplished he telegraphed Roosevelt: "Hail and rejoice. A great load is lifted from us as a party. I congratulate you."<sup>57</sup>

Three days later in a statement to the press Platt took occasion to express what he thought of Roosevelt's action on the Franchise bill. It was done indirectly:

In the passage of the original Ford bill every principle of sound legislation was violated. It was carelessly drawn and thoughtlessly enacted. . . . It seems to me that any child can see that this was no proper way of covering so important a matter.<sup>58</sup>

Yet as party harmony was always supreme to the Easy Boss, he also praised the Governor for his recent statement that "the Republican Party is neither against the corporations nor for them;" he praised the tax measure just enacted; he praised the policy according to which "every important Republican influence, from one end of the State to the other, wisely brought together and wisely directed by the Governor, participated harmoniously" in the special session just ended.<sup>59</sup>

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56 Cf. New York Times, May 23, 24 and 25, 1899.

57 Library of Congress Letters, May 26, 1899.

58 New York Times, May 29.

59 Ibid. The Times, commenting on Platt's statement, saw indications of a "very wide breach between the Governor and the Boss, and the Boss is on the outside." The following months brought no substantiation or verification of this, which therefore was probably a case of the wish being father to the thought.

## 4

The third great conflict between Roosevelt and the organization was the fiercest. In the first the Governor-elect had declared his (limited) independence by refusing to accept Hendricks to head the Public Works Department. In the second he had shown the power of his appeal to the people in his sudden and spectacular franchise victory. In the third he was to demonstrate dogged determination and persistence in holding against great and real odds to a course he knew was right.

The term of the State Superintendent of Insurance would expire in February, 1900, when Governor Roosevelt must either renominate the present incumbent or name a successor. He had good reason for wanting a new man. Louis F. Payn had been in politics almost as long as Thomas Platt and was his life-long friend. He was Republican boss of an upstate county who had long been lobbyist for certain large corporations, whose fees for his personal services at Albany had been his only source of income. In 1895 Elihu Root, a staunch Republican, had referred to Payn as "a stench in the nostrils of the people of the State of New York."<sup>60</sup> Alexander credits him with bringing about

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<sup>60</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 207. Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 437-438.

Black's nomination for Governor in 1896.<sup>61</sup> As a reward, Black had nominated him Superintendent of Insurance. This aroused a storm of protest. Some even of the "regular" Republicans in the Senate refused to vote in favor of the appointment; however it had been confirmed.<sup>62</sup> The office was important, involving dealings with some of the largest and most powerful corporations in the State. Payn became more "valuable" than ever to his clients among big businessmen.

In a letter to Lodge on January 22, 1900, Roosevelt summed up at length the case against Payn: he had openly admitted that before his appointment as Insurance Superintendent he had been a "lobbyist who made no money aside from what he got from corporations for taking care of their interests at Albany." This work, moreover, was done "not by appearing before Committees, but by what he called his 'personal influence' with members" of the legislature. Roosevelt goes on to point out that Payn, in spite of judgments against him amounting to forty thousand dollars when he took office, had been able "out of his seven thousand dollars a year salary" to save enough to be able to borrow nearly half a million dollars from a Trust company, the directors of which are "also the directors of an insurance

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<sup>61</sup> Four New Yorkers, 258.

<sup>62</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 207.

company which is under his supervision." It was probably a perfect example of what the Governor denounced as "corruption" in politics.<sup>63</sup>

As we saw in the preceding chapter, Payn was Governor Black's chief supporter in the latter's fight for renomination, and also figured largely in the nearly-successful attempt to prove Roosevelt ineligible for the governorship.<sup>64</sup> In the campaign Roosevelt recognized that the canal scandal and Payn were burdens that hampered the Republican cause. Alexander offers evidence that Payn, with other Black men, actually worked against Roosevelt's election; after the election, while the others were denying the charge, "Payn said nothing, but boldly dismissed from the Insurance Department four employees who had actively supported Roosevelt."<sup>65</sup> As long as he discharged the duties of his office he could not be removed, but the new Governor was determined that he would not be reappointed the next year.

In March, 1899, a Senate group took occasion one day to eulogize Payn. The New York Tribune next morning thought this "was plainly intended to pave the way to an effort in the Senate to reject any candidate Governor Roosevelt may nominate

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<sup>63</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 437-38.

<sup>64</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 204.

<sup>65</sup> Four New Yorkers, 322-323.

in 1900 as successor to Louis F. Payn." The next month, while Roosevelt was fighting for his civil service bill, Payn, through the legislators he influenced, was conspicuous in the fight against it.<sup>66</sup> The Insurance Superintendent presents an interesting figure. Evidently he felt perfectly secure in his position. His own influence in the Senate was considerable, while his closeness to Senator Platt made him seem impregnable. He knew Roosevelt heartily disliked him; certainly he himself made no effort to disguise his feelings towards the Governor. By his actions he seemed to assume the attitude: "Try to put me out; I dare you."

As early as November, 1899, the papers were speculating about the approaching contest. Although Roosevelt's determination was well known, the consensus of opinion placed the odds in Payn's favor: he wanted to keep the office; recently he had become increasingly friendly with Odell whose opinion "carried weight" with the Governor; but his chief strength, it was recognized, was Platt. With the Senator on his side, victory was certain.<sup>67</sup> Could any one doubt about the stand the Boss would take?

It is certain, from all the evidence, that Platt asked

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<sup>66</sup> New York Tribune, March 3, 1899; cf. ibid., April 12: "Senator Ambler, one of Louis F. Payn's representatives, voted against the bill in the Senate. . . ."

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., November 23, 24 and 29, 1899.

Roosevelt to reappoint Payn.<sup>68</sup> It is not clear to what extent he was prepared to demand it. From the beginning the Governor refused to consider the proposition. He offered to appoint Hendricks,<sup>69</sup> to whom he had refused the Public Works Department, but Payn--never.

The Boss was now in a very uncomfortable position. Roosevelt was certainly going to nominate someone other than Payn, and if Platt foiled him by blocking the confirmation in the Senate, thus keeping Payn in office, Roosevelt could appoint a temporary successor as soon as the legislature adjourned and Payn would be out de facto for the rest of the Governor's term. This would be open war, and Platt instinctively shrank from such a course. If, on the other hand, he accepted Roosevelt's compromise offer of Hendricks, this would mean breaking with Payn, and a considerable part of the organization would go with him.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., November 29. Cf. Platt, Autobiography, 375. Platt was probably not motivated by any personal affection for Payn; he had no reason to be grateful for the latter's efforts on behalf of Governor Black. But besides the usual considerations of party harmony, there was the fact that the insurance companies were large contributors to campaign funds and their wishes should be respected. They were almost unanimous in calling for Payn's reappointment. Cf. Roosevelt, Autobiography, 292; Gosnell, Boss Platt, 209.

<sup>69</sup> New York Tribune, December 13.

<sup>70</sup> On December 18 the New York Tribune reported a disagreement between George W. Aldridge, former Superintendent of Public Works, and Senator Platt, over an Assembly committee chairmanship. Republican politicians were saying that Platt

Characteristically, Platt kept his seat between the horns of the dilemma, uncomfortable as it was, as long as possible, hoping perhaps for some unforeseen occurrence that might relieve the situation. At first he leaned towards the Payn horn as far as he could, by persuading Hendricks to refuse Governor Roosevelt's offer of the appointment.<sup>71</sup> That, it seems, was the limit to which he would go on behalf of Payn, who began to feel more confident than ever. On December 15 the New York Tribune reported that his friends were circulating a rumor that the organization leaders were planning to oppose the Governor's renomination. This evidently angered Platt. He and Odell both publicly denied the rumor, stating that they had been in complete harmony with the Governor. Payn hastened to back down, but the damage had been done. Two days later Odell stated authoritatively that the organization would not be drawn into any fight with Governor Roosevelt over Payn.<sup>72</sup>

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was ready to "drop Aldridge," and that if he should, "it is likely that Payn, who is nourishing fierce resentment because the organization will not help him in his fight to keep the State Insurance Department, will join hands with Aldridge right away to make trouble for the State organization."

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. The Tribune trenchantly points out that Hendricks had been extremely desirous of being appointed Superintendent of Public Works. Now when the lucrative yet less demanding Insurance job was offered, he had to decline in the interests of his "private business."

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., December 14, 15 and 17.

Privately, Platt continued to remonstrate with Roosevelt. At the end of December the latter wrote Lodge: "Platt does not want me to fight Payne [Payn] and feels pretty bitterly about it, but here I could not compromise and I refused to alter my position." He realized, however, that he would not get a Senate confirmation without Platt's fiat, so "the attitude of the Republican machine means that I will not get him out. At any rate I shall cease to be responsible for him."<sup>73</sup> After the turn of the year the conflict continued unabated. Roosevelt made public a list of the men he was considering for the post, Payn of course not being among them. He was, however, still "in the fight to stay." Platt remained uncomfortable and neutral.<sup>74</sup>

On January 15 the case "broke." Certain disclosures were made that day involving the State Trust Company of New York City, whose directors "had lent enormous sums of money to themselves and others on several varieties of unsatisfactory security. Among these loans of doubtful legality, one was to Louis F. Payn for \$435,000."<sup>75</sup> The next day the New York World revealed that those same directors also controlled the American Surety Company which was under the jurisdiction of Payn in the State

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73 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 432.

74 New York Tribune, January 6, 7 and 21, 1900.

75 Gosnell, Boss Platt, 211; Tribune, January 18.



Insurance Department.<sup>76</sup> The fight was over. Payn's cause was finished, and no one realized it sooner than Senator Platt. He quickly left his "between the horns" seat, anxious now that he be consulted as to Payn's successor.<sup>77</sup> Roosevelt magnanimously renewed his offer to Hendricks, who replied that he would accept if he could be assured of organization support in the Senate. Needless to say, Platt promised the support. The nomination was duly sent to the Senate on January 30; two days later that august body solemnly confirmed the appointment and the case was closed.

This was another Roosevelt victory. True, the fortuitous disclosure of Payn's improper financial connections had insured the triumph; nevertheless the Governor deserved a great deal of credit for his courage and perserverance. "All that I can reasonably do to stay in with the organization I will," he had written his brother-in-law, January 22, "but I will not re-nominate Payn. What the outcome will be I can't tell."<sup>78</sup>

The victory marked the end of the "year of strife," and almost the end of Roosevelt's accomplishments as Governor.

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<sup>76</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 213.

<sup>77</sup> "Platt was now frantic lest he would not be consulted in the making of the final choice."--Gosnell, Boss Platt, 211. Cf. New York Tribune, January 19.

<sup>78</sup> Cowles, Letters, 230.

No outstanding legislation came from the 1900 session at Albany, whether because of "the very fact that so much was done in 1899," as Roosevelt later averred,<sup>79</sup> or because greater things than laws for New York State were claiming the attention of both the Governor and the party leaders. Most prominent was the question of the Republican vice presidential candidate for 1900.

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<sup>79</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 214, citing Barnes vs. Roosevelt, 402.

## CHAPTER IV

### 1900: FROM GOVERNOR TO VICE PRESIDENT

The Republican National Convention in 1900 was one of the most unusual in the history of the country. For all practical purposes, the delegates assembled in Philadelphia almost solely to select a candidate for vice president. As early as the summer of 1899 it was already fairly certain that the following year would bring no contest for the presidency. Some papers, notably the New York Times, had been mentioning the presidential possibilities of Theodore Roosevelt even for 1900;<sup>1</sup> and when the New York Governor aroused tremendous enthusiasm throughout the West on a trip in June, this talk became more widespread. Roosevelt himself, however, had scotched the rumors by announcing publicly and emphatically that "of course he was for President McKinley's renomination, and that every one should be for it."<sup>2</sup> After that everyone did seem to be for it, at least among the Republicans. Many newspapers editors must have

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1 April 13, 1899.

2 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 404.

been a little disappointed. With no struggle in sight, what could be found as a substitute for the column-filling discussions of this candidate and that? Whence would come the thousands of rumors that usually fly to the aid of hard-pressed editors during the pre-campaign months? This may explain to a great extent why the subject of the vice presidency that year became so prominent. The death of McKinley's first running mate in November, 1899, quickened interest in the choice of his successor. "Who is going to be the candidate for vice president?" was to be the all-important question. No one, it seems, came back with what should have been the obvious rejoinder: "Who cares?"

As a point of historical fact, Governor Roosevelt was unanimously nominated for vice president. "And thereby hangs a tale." Why was Roosevelt nominated? He did not want the job. How was it accomplished? Senator Hanna was bitterly opposed to having the Governor on the national ticket, and Hanna was the most powerful individual in the Party. It is a fascinating subject for research, since many of the why's and wherefore's of Roosevelt's "shelving" have never been fully answered. However, it is not within the scope of the present work to discuss this interesting matter in all its details. The problem must be introduced only because Senator Platt was involved. This chapter, then, will endeavor to explain first why Platt wanted Roosevelt nominated for the vice presidency. That he did want it is

certain; the question is, did he desire it in order to get Roosevelt out of New York, or for some less sinister reason? Secondly the Governor's thoughts and desires on the subject should be set down at least briefly. Finally, a summary will be given of the various explanations that have been offered as to how the nomination was brought about.

## 1

In order to learn why Senator Platt ultimately wanted Roosevelt nominated for the vice presidency, it will help to find out when he began to want it. Certainly he was not the first to do so, because the possibility had been mentioned as early as March 21, 1899. On that day Senator Chandler of New Hampshire happened to be in New York and was visiting Republican headquarters at the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He was quoted next day as saying that "Governor Roosevelt would make a good candidate for Vice-President."<sup>3</sup> Whether he formed this opinion himself, or was influenced by others, was not stated. The following September Vice President Hobart's failing health raised the question of a possible successor in his office. The New York Tribune, on September 9, ran two articles on the subject. One stated that Hobart would like to retire, the other that Governor

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3 New York Tribune, March 22, 1899.

Roosevelt was not seeking the place.<sup>4</sup>

Senator Platt, at first, was very clear on the subject. In May he had given a statement to the press praising the administration of McKinley and Hobart, predicting their re-election, and denying that Roosevelt was a candidate.<sup>5</sup> In July, when Senator Lodge was thinking favorably of the vice presidency for Roosevelt (a view he never relinquished,) the Governor wrote him on July 21: "Queer, nice erratic old Senator Chandler has been out here [Oyster Bay], taking your view of the Vice Presidency, a view which Senator Platt bitterly opposes."<sup>6</sup>

Four months later Platt seemed to be holding the same opinion, though by that time Vice President Hobart was nearing the end of his fatal illness. On November 17, Lieutenant-Governor Timothy Woodruff, who was already ambitious to be vice president, conferred with Platt at the Fifth Avenue Hotel and after the meeting announced: "I think that Senator Platt is right in

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., September 9.

<sup>5</sup> I incline strongly to the opinion that Platt at that time was speaking for the benefit of Washington. As noted above, page 89, the New York Times had quite openly been proclaiming Roosevelt's suitability for the presidency and predicting "long faces and sleepless nights in Washington a year hence." --Times, April 13, 1899. Platt would certainly have been anxious to reassure the administration on this point for his own sake, with an eye on the federal patronage.

<sup>6</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 411. (*Italics mine.*)

saying that it is too early to talk about possible candidates for the Vice Presidency."<sup>7</sup> Five days later Hobart's death gave birth to many ambitions and rumors. Political gossip named Root, Odell, and Sherman, the New York Congressman from Utica, as possibilities for the position. Senator Chandler was now campaigning openly for his favorite, Roosevelt, and this brought another statement from Senator Platt. He

was asked about the possibility of Governor Roosevelt accepting the nomination, and expressed himself emphatically upon the subject. He said he was convinced that Governor Roosevelt was not a candidate, that he would not be one and that he would not be nominated.<sup>8</sup>

Sometime during the following two weeks Roosevelt, by this time definitely averse to taking the vice presidency, had occasion to discuss the subject with Platt. Writing to Lodge on December 11, he said: "Platt told me definitely that of course he was for me for a renomination--that everybody was--. . . ."<sup>9</sup> This gave him confidence that he would be able to fight successfully for renomination the following summer; and it explains his subsequent persistence in refusing the vice presidential nomination.

The first hint of a change in Platt's attitude came about the middle of December, 1899, when he spoke in Washington

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7 New York Tribune, November 18, 1899.

8 Ibid., November 27.

9 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 426.

with Senator Lodge about Governor Roosevelt, his later presidential chances, and what effect on these taking the vice presidency in 1900 would have. "But," Lodge wrote Roosevelt, "so far as the V. P. is concerned his views are changing, if not changed, . . . by the drift of events. . . . He agreed with me that you had merely to say the word to have the V. P., so you see I am no dreamer on that point."<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Platt undoubtedly had spoken to Lodge in strict confidence, and so did not expect Roosevelt to learn that he was changing his mind.<sup>11</sup> Four days later he spoke to the Governor in New York, "simply saying he had not changed his belief--that I ought not to take the Vice Presidency."<sup>12</sup>

After five more days, on December 23 there was another conference, and again Platt dissimulated. He told Roosevelt only that Lodge and Chandler wanted him nominated, that some far Western Senators thought he would strengthen the national ticket, but that people generally thought it would be a bad move for Roosevelt personally. In other words, the wily Boss ap-

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10 Ibid., 430-431.

11 The closing words of Lodge's letter were: "Do not say a word of what I have written to anyone. It is all in the dearest confidence. Above all do not let Platt suspect in the remotest way that I have written you or that you had the faintest idea that he was going to talk to you about your own affairs. 'Your fingers on your lips' as Hamlet says."--Ibid.

12 Ibid., 432.



peared to make his own the feeling of aversion that Roosevelt already had towards the vice presidency. The Governor had reason to be suspicious in the light of what Platt had told Lodge two weeks previously.<sup>13</sup>

The very next day that reason was increased when he learned that Platt had told some New York politicians that Roosevelt would undoubtedly have to take the vice presidency; matters were shaping themselves so as to make this inevitable. "He gave me no hint of this," Roosevelt confided to Lodge, "taking exactly the opposite view, and I do not understand what was up, or for the matter of that what is up now. . . ."<sup>14</sup> After this, it is inconceivable that he was not profoundly distrustful of Platt's intentions in his regard. It was not until three weeks later, at another Saturday meeting with the Governor, that Platt revealed the trend of his thoughts. "Platt for the first time stated to me very strongly that he believed I ought to take the Vice Presidency both for National and for State reasons."<sup>15</sup>

The question of why Senator Platt wanted Governor Roosevelt nominated for vice president can now be answered. In his autobiography the Senator says:

I believed that the death of Vice-President Hobart

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13 Ibid., 433.

14 Ibid., 434.

15 Ibid., 437.

had weakened the Republican party, and that some strong, popular personality should be added to the ticket to be nominated in 1900; and I firmly believed that the virile personality of Mr. Roosevelt, supported by his war record in Cuba and by his administrative record as Governor of New York, would add great strength to the national ticket that year.<sup>16</sup>

Very possibly that was quite true; certainly it was not the whole truth. Platt had advised Roosevelt to take the vice presidency both for national and for state reasons. Assuming that the foregoing quotation gives the "national," one may be pardoned for asking about the "state" reasons. The same autobiography suggests, at least, the obvious answer. After describing how the Governor had "clinched his fist and gritted his teeth, and drove through the legislature the franchise tax law" over the "rebellion" of the organization leaders, Platt goes on to say:

Right upon the heels of the enactment of this legislation, Roosevelt made it known that he would be a candidate for renomination. I determined that he should be the candidate for Vice-President, and that Odell . . . should head the State ticket.<sup>17</sup>

Compare this with Roosevelt's letter to Lodge of February 3, 1900, two weeks to the day after Platt had first mentioned the "national and state" reasons: "Now this letter is to be strictly secret. I have found out one reason why Senator Platt wants

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16 Platt, Autobiography, 383.

17 Ibid., 375.

me nominated for the Vice Presidency." After mentioning that he is convinced that Platt really liked him personally and was satisfied with the way he was conducting politics, the Governor continued:

. . . but the big monied men with whom he is in close touch and whose campaign contributions have certainly been no inconsiderable factor in his strength, have been pressing him very strongly to get me put in the Vice Presidency, so as to get me out of the State. It was the big insurance companies, possessing enormous wealth, that gave Payne [Payn] his formidable strength, and they to a man want me out. The great corporations affected by the franchise tax have also been at the Senator. . . . I find that they have been at Platt for the last two or three months and he has finally begun to yield to them and to take their view.<sup>18</sup>

There can be no reasonable doubt that Roosevelt here gave an entirely accurate statement of the facts. There seems to be no evidence to disprove it, and much that corroborates it. The opinion of the newspapers of the day was well summed up by a cartoon which appeared in the New York Tribune, February 4, 1900. It shows the G.O.P. 1900 elephant squatting on his haunches, with two seats upon his back. The front seat is occupied by McKinley, the other is empty. Senator Platt with a crafty look is bowing to Governor Roosevelt, and offering him the empty seat. The caption below reads: "Inviting Teddy to

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18 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 449.

Take a Back Seat."<sup>19</sup>

Practically all of Roosevelt's friends were convinced that he should fight the nomination as being the scheme of the New York organization to eliminate him from state politics.

"All my western friends keep writing me to the same effect. I do not think I have had a letter from any of them advising me to take the nomination for Vice President, and I have had scores urging me not to take it."<sup>20</sup> Examples of these letters can be found among the Roosevelt papers at the Library of Congress. One will suffice:

I was in New York a few days ago for about a week's time. I was there during Convention Week. Although "only a looker-on in Venice" yet I heard and saw a good deal.

I would not care to be quoted, or have my name used in any connection,--but will say that I feel sure there is a well-defined purpose to force you onto the National Ticket,--not from any love of yourself but to eliminate you from the state politics of New York, and with the view also of shelving you indefinitely.<sup>21</sup>

There is the testimony of Joseph B. Bishop:

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<sup>19</sup> For other expressions of the same tenor, cf. New York Tribune, February 5, 1900; Times, June 14 and 19, 1900.

<sup>20</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 433.

<sup>21</sup> Library of Congress Letters, April 25, 1900. Other letters in the same collection speak of an "understanding among Senators" that the Convention was going to nominate Roosevelt and he would "have to accept;" "I am afraid they are going to stampede you for the Vice-Presidency;" "you must not permit the machine to shelve you that way;" "you will be driven into the Vice-Presidency;" "prevent Platt's playing any tricks."

In common with his other friends I was strongly opposed to the nomination of Roosevelt for Vice-President. Throughout his service as Governor I had been in constant and intimate association with him and had been fully informed of every step that he had taken in his efforts to put his ideas into practise, including his struggles with Senator Platt. There was no doubt in my mind that desire to get him out of the State was the chief if not the sole cause of the movement to nominate him for the Vice-Presidency.<sup>22</sup>

All historians and commentators on the period, to the writer's knowledge, have accepted this view as correct.<sup>23</sup> Platt himself, it should be remembered, did not deny this in his autobiography, but rather he clearly implies the same in the passage quoted above, page 95. It is clear, then, that Platt wanted Roosevelt nominated for vice president as an honorable means of getting him out of New York. He did not personally dislike the Governor; rather the contrary. Roosevelt, who personally had come to like Platt and dealt honestly with him,<sup>24</sup> could write to Lodge towards the end of the fight over "Lou" Payn: "I believe Platt rather likes me, though I render him uncomfortable

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22 Theodore Roosevelt and His Time, I, 136.

23 Roosevelt, Autobiography, 308; Gosnell, Boss Platt, 119; Pringle, Roosevelt, 222; Alexander, Four New Yorkers, 332; William R. Thayer, The Life of John Hay, Boston, 1915, 2 vols., II, 431-432; Herbert Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna, New York, 1912, 309; Charles S. Olcott, William McKinley, Boston, 1916, 2 vols., II, 269.

24 Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 426-427.

by some of the things I do."<sup>25</sup> The Senator admitted his high personal regard of Roosevelt because of his honesty and fidelity to his promises,<sup>26</sup> but political facts must always be faced if one wants to succeed in politics. Roosevelt had been "a disturbing element in every situation to which he has been a party," and Platt "had no reason to believe the leopard changes his spots."<sup>27</sup> He wanted no more franchise tax laws nor repetitions of the Payn fight. He wanted no more biting of the corporations' hands that fed his organization. It would be better all round if the Governor were not renominated for this office. Therefore the vice presidency was an ideal solution, since it was an honorable position and a promotion. The project would be worth the Senator's best efforts.

## 2

To understand Roosevelt's attitude towards the vice presidency it is necessary first of all to remember that he definitely had ambitions for the presidency. As early as the fall of 1895 Senator Lodge had written to the then Police Commissioner of New York: "I do not say you are to be President tomorrow.

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25 Ibid., 437.

26 Autobiography, 374-375.

27 These were Platt's thoughts about Roosevelt when the latter was seeking an endorsement for the Assistant Secretaryship of the Navy in 1897. Cf. ibid., 541.

I do not say it will be--I am sure that it may and can be."<sup>28</sup>  
 Yet it was characteristic of Roosevelt to banish such thoughts and be loathe to admit, even to himself, that there was any likelihood of going so high. On another occasion in 1895, when two close friends were visiting him at his office, one of them happened to ask him whether he was a possible candidate for President of the United States. The reaction must have startled them:

. . . Roosevelt leaped to his feet, red with rage. "Don't you dare ask me that!" he almost screamed. "Don't you put such ideas into my head. No friend of mine would say a thing like that . . . Never, never, must . . . either of you remind a man . . . on a political job that he may be President. It almost always kills him politically. He loses his nerve; he can't do his work; he gives up the very traits that are making him a possibility. . . . I must be wanting to be President. Every young man does. But I won't let myself think of it. . . . If I do . . . I'll be careful, calculating, cautious, and so . . . I'll beat myself. See?"<sup>29</sup>

Pringle goes on to point out the political wisdom of Roosevelt's attitude, which also found frequent expression in his letters to Lodge and to his sister, Mrs. Cowles.<sup>30</sup>

Still he was guided, perhaps subconsciously, in all

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<sup>28</sup> Lodge, Correspondence, I, 179.

<sup>29</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 154-155, citing The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens, New York, 1931, 159-160.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Cowles, Letters, 226; 233; 240-241. Also Lodge, Correspondence, I, 334; 341; 447; 457.

his public actions by the consuming ambition to get as high as possible. Looking on each office he held as a stepping stone to something higher, he felt that the way to step up was for him to do the best possible work in his present position. He hungered for recognition of his efforts and approval of his accomplishments, always with an eye to popular support; this helps explain why he was so dramatic in everything he did and so successful in selling himself to the people.

In June, 1899, Governor Roosevelt went West to attend a Rough Riders' reunion at Las Vegas. Writing to Senator Lodge after his return, he confessed amazement at the way he had been greeted. "At every station . . . I was received by dense throngs exactly as if I had been a presidential candidate." Because the papers noted the same thing and tongues were starting to wag, he had felt constrained, he said, to declare at once for McKinley's renomination.<sup>31</sup> In other words, he knew that besides popular support he needed machine support, so it would not pay to alienate the national organization. He next took up Lodge's earlier suggestion, that the vice presidency in 1900 was something to aim at, and evaluated it in terms of his chances for the presidency in 1904. His present popularity, he felt, could not last, so he would "be inclined to accept any honorable posi-

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31 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 403-404.



tion; that the Vice Presidency is." On the other hand, he preferred a more active position; he believed he

could do more work in two years of the Governorship, although I might get myself in a tangle. What I should really most like would be to be re-elected Governor with a first class Lieutenant-Governor, and then be offered the Secretaryship of War for four years. Of course it would be even better if I could become United States Senator, but of that I do not see any chance.<sup>32</sup>

From this time, "1904" and his chances of getting the big prize that year, were to be the guiding rule for his decisions. How could he best remain in the public eye? As time passed he became more and more convinced that as vice president he would not be able to "do anything;" ". . . if I did anything I would attract suspicion and antagonism."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, a renomination as Governor would seem to be best, unless he could be appointed Secretary of War.<sup>34</sup> Senator Lodge, who had a broader view of things from his place in Washington, never tired of urging his friend to take the vice presidency. He advanced many reasons, but always the chief one was: it would be the stepping stone to higher things, while the New York governorship was too uncertain. He knew of Roosevelt's difficulties with the Republican machine, and he feared for his safety in the "troubled

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32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., 433.

34 Ibid., 428.

waters" of New York.<sup>35</sup>

When Roosevelt learned of Senator Platt's desire to "kick him upstairs"<sup>36</sup> he only became more set in his determination not to be kicked. On February 12 he issued a formal statement to the newspapers: "It is proper for me to state definitely that under no circumstances could I or would I accept the nomination for the Vice-Presidency."<sup>37</sup> Final as this announcement seems, it must nevertheless be understood in the light of a sentence he had written his sister back on December 17: ". . . at present it looks as if I would be renominated. Of course were my renomination out of the question I should accept the Vice-Presidency were I offered it."<sup>38</sup> The periods of gloom and pessimism that came to the Governor in the spring of 1900 seemed to result from the fear that after declining the vice presidency he might lose in the fight for renomination the next fall. This explains the curious afterthought he added in a letter to Lodge, April 23: "By the way, I did not say that I would not under any circumstances accept the Vice-Presidency."<sup>39</sup> For the most part,

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35 Ibid., 446, 458.

36 Platt uses the expression in the Autobiography, 397.

37 New York Tribune, February 13, 1900.

38 Cowles, Letters, 225.

39 Lodge, Correspondence, I, 461.

though, he felt secure on this point. On February 15, the New York County Republican Committee approved of the Governor's recent statement declining the vice presidential nomination, and unanimously endorsed him for renomination.<sup>40</sup> At the state convention which chose delegates to the National Convention, "both the permanent chairman and the temporary chairman endorsed his administration and declared that he should have another term, a pronouncement which brought forth many cheers from the delegates."<sup>41</sup>

Until the final day of the Philadelphia Convention, then, Roosevelt kept repeating his determination to avoid the vice presidency. As will be seen, his actions were to a certain extent to belie his words, and this would explain in part why he was finally nominated.

## 3

The history of the 1900 Convention is very unsatisfactory--as history. There seem to be as many different versions of it as there have been writers about it. The present writer can only sift the different accounts, add whatever other facts are available, and set down what appears to him to be the

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<sup>40</sup> New York Tribune, February 16.

<sup>41</sup> Gosnell, Boss Platt, 119, citing the New York Tribune for April 18, 1900.

truth.<sup>42</sup>

We have seen how the unanimity for McKinley's renomination, together with Vice President Hobart's death, had focused popular attention on the selection of a candidate for the second place on the ticket. Other factors tended to highlight this unusual state of affairs still more. One of these was the public declining of the nomination by the leading candidate, Governor Roosevelt. Closely allied to this was another factor: namely the widespread report that the Republican organization in Roosevelt's state was desirous that he should be nominated. A third factor, less frequently mentioned yet very important, was the lack of an administration candidate, which left the field wide open.

Senator Hanna tried to make a choice for the administration, as early as December 17, 1899. He was quoted as saying "that the choice of the National organization will be Mr. Root, who, since he became Secretary of War, has made an excellent impression, and who is willing to accept the nomination."<sup>43</sup> Root,

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<sup>42</sup> The chief works consulted for accounts of the Convention are: Pringle, Roosevelt; Alexander, Four New Yorkers; Gosnell, Boss Platt; Bishop, Roosevelt and His Time; Olcott, McKinley; Croly, Hanna; and the autobiographies of Roosevelt and of Platt.

<sup>43</sup> New York Tribune, December 18, 1899. In a letter dated the following day Lodge told Roosevelt: "There is not going to be a vacancy in War Dept., (do not breathe a word of this.)" Ten days later: "Platt told me that Root would not be

however, publicly declined the nomination on January 10. Thereafter till the last day of the Convention there was no real administration favorite, because McKinley persistently refused to make any choice even after the Convention got under way. This was to be influential in Roosevelt's nomination.

The Governor's actions and declarations during the weeks preceding the Convention are hard to explain. His persistent refusal to follow the unvarying, strongly worded advice of Senator Lodge, his best friend, was unusual. Even granting that his reasons were sound for wanting to run the risk of staying in New York politics, he was all the more foolhardy in brushing off Lodge's solemn warning: "If you go to that convention, however, as a delegate, as I see stated in the newspapers, you will be nominated, as the situation looks today. . . ." <sup>44</sup> Lodge never changed this view, and repeated the warning later, but it fell on deaf ears. Though the Governor had been elected a delegate-at-large to the National Convention, he was free to send a substitute; yet he excused his determination to go in person by

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Vice-President because the President wished him to remain in his cabinet." Then came Root's public refusal to be a candidate, January 10. It is possible that all this meant a rap on the knuckles to Hanna; at least there does not seem to be any subsequent account of his "naming" the next vice president. Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 430, 433.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 459.

saying he would be thought a coward if he did not, and hoped the vice presidency would be all fixed up ahead of time. Lodge gently pointed out the absurdity of the first excuse, and gave warning that the Convention would begin without a settled candidate.<sup>45</sup> It was probably psychologically impossible for Roosevelt not to go to the Convention. He undoubtedly felt he had to go to counteract Platt's machinations; yet it was to be his presence in Philadelphia that made Platt's plans possible. He told himself his election as delegate-at-large obliged him to go, but this was foolish. If he argued that as Governor he had to represent the State, he forgot that he was only one of ninety such representatives, and had the option of sending a substitute. Probably he just did not want to miss anything. Whatever the explanation, he was determined to go, and he went.

Much has been made of Senator Platt's plotting with old "Matt" Quay, the Pennsylvania boss, against Mark Hanna; and rightly so. Yet it is absolutely impossible to determine accurately to what extent their efforts contributed to the final result. Platt knew that his chief obstacle was Hanna's opposition to having Roosevelt on the national ticket,<sup>46</sup> so the Easy Boss

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>46</sup> That Hanna was keenly averse to Roosevelt's being in national politics there is no room for doubt. The same reasons that Platt had for wanting him out of New York, Hanna had for not wanting him in Washington. Roosevelt wrote: "Each took

looked for help. Quay was his man, for two reasons. He had been a close friend for nearly twelve years,<sup>47</sup> and was nursing a deep, implacable grudge against Senator Hanna.<sup>48</sup> If Hanna did not want Roosevelt for vice president, Quay would be eager to bring it about.

It is not known when Platt and Quay joined forces. The former's account, which Pringle terms "a suavely untruthful

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a position opposite to that of the other, but each at that time cordially sympathized with the other's feelings about me--it was the manifestation and not the feelings that differed."--Autobiography, 308. Cf. J. Hampton Moore, Roosevelt and the Old Guard, Philadelphia, 1925, 26. Matthew Josephson, The President Makers, New York, 1940, 110, speaks in no uncertain terms of Senator Hanna's dislike: ". . . 'that damned cowboy,' as Mark Hanna called him."

<sup>47</sup> To Quay, as chairman of the national committee, went most of the credit that Benjamin Harrison carried New York, in 1888. "The friendship between Platt and Quay from this time on was very close."--Gosnell, Boss Platt, 35.

<sup>48</sup> The Quay-Hanna antipathy is a separate story in itself. It grew out of rivalry between manufacturing interests in Pennsylvania and Ohio. "Quay, a far shrewder politician, was forever winning for his Pennsylvania masters governmental favors and concessions which Hanna had coveted for the steel mills and coal mines of Ohio." McKinley's nomination in 1896 gave Hanna his chance. He replaced Quay as chairman of the national Committee and leader of the party, but that was not the worst. In 1899 occurred an uprising against Quay in his own state, and the Pennsylvania legislature refused to return him to the Senate; the vote was 79-79. Governor Stone then gave Quay a certificate of appointment. The Senate, however, voted not to seat Quay; the count was 33-32, and Hanna's had been the deciding vote. Cf. Walter Davenport and Robert B. Vale, "Power and Glory," Collier's Weekly, February 7, 1931, 24.

one,<sup>49</sup> admits that they co-operated at the Convention.<sup>50</sup> They were smart enough to realize that since one of their strongest assets was Roosevelt's popularity with the rank-and-file of the delegates, it was to them that they should first direct their efforts.

The Convention officially opened on Tuesday, June 19, but the leaders of the delegations, with large numbers of their followers, arrived the preceding Saturday and Sunday.<sup>51</sup> Sunday night the opening guns were fired. Quay's Pennsylvania delegation pledged its entire vote to Governor Roosevelt for vice president, which was a signal for the delegations from several western states to do the same. A regular "stampede" for Roosevelt had started.<sup>52</sup> A hurried phone call to Washington was put through by the administration forces under Hanna. "In despair Charles Dick, secretary of the Republican National Committee, appealed to President McKinley to check the movement." Only the presidential endorsement of some suitable candidate like Long of

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<sup>49</sup> Roosevelt, 222.

<sup>50</sup> Platt, Autobiography, 382.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. New York Times, June 18, 1900.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.; more than a week before this the Times noted that among politicians at the Fifth Avenue Hotel there was talk of pro-Roosevelt forces "stampeding the convention." The opinion was also expressed that "a man should obey the commands of his party. No man is too big to refuse a nomination for Vice President." (June 10, 1900.)



Massachusetts or Dolliver of Iowa could have hoped to check it, but the reply came from Washington: "The President has no choice for Vice President. . . . The choice of the convention will be his choice; he has no advice to give."<sup>53</sup> This was a serious setback for Hanna.

The only thing that kept the Sunday stampede from making Roosevelt's nomination absolutely certain, was the well-known determination of the Governor not to accept it. His statement the next day was awaited anxiously. Pressure from both sides was being exerted, and he feared to move either way. If he now repeated his emphatic refusal to accept even if nominated, he would probably avoid the nomination but would more probably seriously hurt himself politically.<sup>54</sup> If on the other hand he too readily acceded to the popular demand, in the face of all he had said, he feared it would be taken as a sign of weakness, which would also detract from his future chances.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Olcott, McKinley, II, 271-274.

<sup>54</sup> Lodge had warned Roosevelt of this more than two months before. "If you persist in refusing in the presence of the Convention which nominates you I am very much afraid it will hurt in future, and there are lots of good men who are strongly for you now who will not like it."--Correspondence, I, 459. The New York Times said, on Tuesday the nineteenth, that should Roosevelt decline "it was not certain that he would be renominated for Governor. Peculiar conditions might make it inexpedient to present him."

<sup>55</sup> ". . . if I am now nominated for Vice-President, it will be impossible to get it out of the heads of a number of

As a result his official statement on Monday did not say anything positive, but merely repeated his belief that his duty was to his own State; he did not want the nomination for vice president, and he asked his friends to respect his wishes.<sup>56</sup> He did not, however, refuse to accept the nomination should it be forced on him, and this was the opening that Platt and Quay wanted.<sup>57</sup>

On Tuesday when the Convention came to order there occurred a scene which has become famous. "Just a bit late,"

as Mark Hanna was thumping for order, a burly figure strode down the aisle toward the New York delegation. He was wearing the wide-brimmed black hat that had attracted attention during his campaign for governor. Its similarity to the campaign hat of a Rough Rider was obvious, and Wayne MacVeagh, who had been Attorney-General under Garfield, looked at it with amusement.

"Gentlemen," he whispered to his neighbors, "that's an Acceptance Hat."

Why Roosevelt wore the hat must be left to the psychoanalysts. He had been loudly, if vaguely, insisting that he would prefer to be governor of New York. He paid no attention to the applause which

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people that the machine had forced me into it for their own sinister purpose and that I had yielded from weakness, as they know I do not want the position of Vice-President."--Lodge, Correspondence, I, 461.

<sup>56</sup> New York Times, June 19. "'Sunny Jim' Sherman, who was one day to accept a Vice-presidential nomination himself, and Lucius N. Littauer, a New York delegate, chuckled as they read this, the utterance of a practical politician. 'It's a cinch,' said Sherman; 'all we have to do is go ahead and nominate him.'"--Pringle, Roosevelt, 221, citing A. W. Dunn, From Harrison to Harding, I, 338.

<sup>57</sup> Platt claims credit, without much foundation, for Roosevelt's refusal to decline absolutely.--Autobiography, 389.

swept the convention as he made his entrance. His jaw seemed to be set in determination. He did not even remove his hat during the long two minutes while he made his way toward his seat. He froze into military immobility, the hat against his heart, as the band struck up the national anthem. But on the platform a smile on the round face of Mark Hanna faded.<sup>58</sup>

That night the New York delegation held its caucus. The two accounts of what happened there, as given in the autobiographies of Platt and of Roosevelt, are so conflicting as to be almost ludicrous. Though each man claimed a victory over the other, Roosevelt seems to have the better claim. They had both made statements the previous Sunday. Roosevelt had said: "The New York delegation will not indorse me for Vice President. I control that situation." And Platt: "The New York delegation will unanimously declare for Governor Roosevelt as its candidate for Vice President."<sup>59</sup> The autobiographies agree that the struggle foreshadowed by these statements came to a head in the Tuesday night caucus. Roosevelt said he wanted a renomination as Governor, not the vice presidency. When Platt answered that he had better take the vice presidency because he would not be renominated for Governor, Roosevelt accepted the challenge and said he would fight. The caucus ended by endorsing Woodruff, but the press next day reported that the delegation would sup-

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<sup>58</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 220, citing Olcott, McKinley, II, 275-276, and New York Times, June 20, 1900.

<sup>59</sup> New York Times, June 18.

port Roosevelt if another state nominated him.<sup>60</sup> Which is just what happened.

The next day, Wednesday, Hanna had possibly an outside chance of averting impending defeat. "He was prepared, if necessary," writes Croly, "to carry the fight to the floor of the Convention. By so doing he was taking a grave risk, for, even had he succeeded, his success would have awakened deep resentment."<sup>61</sup> He would also have been disobeying President McKinley's instructions, for the only hope would have been to present an administration candidate and use administration pressure to force him on the delegates, a course which the President forbade.<sup>62</sup> At this point the Quay-Platt attack was renewed. The Pennsylvania boss arose to suggest an amendment of the rules, to the effect that State representation at these national conventions be based on the size of the Republican vote in the latest election. This, says Pringle, "was an ancient proposal, never taken seriously, which would have stripped Southern Republican leaders of their power." The sole purpose was to weaken Mark Hanna, much of whose

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., June 20.

<sup>61</sup> Croly, Hanna, 315.

<sup>62</sup> McKinley had reiterated his instructions by telephone on Tuesday night. "The President's close friends must not undertake to commit the Administration to any candidate. It has no candidate. . . . The Administration wants the choice of the convention, and the President's friends must not dictate to the convention."--Olcott, McKinley, 279.

strength lay in his control of the Southern delegations. Quay's motion threw the convention into an uproar as Southern delegates "climbed to their chairs and shrieked for recognition;" whereupon Quay suggested that the discussion be postponed for a day or two.

Hanna knew that it was the end. He was already irritated by McKinley's refusal to interfere in the contest for Vice-president. When the convention recessed, the delegates from the South flocked to the headquarters of the national chairman to ask what the amendment meant. They said, as Hanna knew they would, that Quay had promised to withdraw it if they swung their support to Roosevelt. Hanna could do nothing except bluster and surrender.<sup>63</sup>

Only Governor Roosevelt's resistance remained to be overcome, for which it seems that McKinley himself was chiefly responsible. He must have known by late Wednesday that Roosevelt was to be the choice of the delegates, and would be nominated unless he would be so foolish as to refuse absolutely at this late stage. Perhaps to forestall any such unfortunate occurrence, McKinley communicated with the Governor through George W. Perkins, of New York. The President spoke "of the great responsibility" involved; "there were other States besides New York" to which Roosevelt owed something; "great responsibility and honor had been added to the office of Vice-President."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Pringle, Roosevelt, 222-223, citing Olcott, McKinley, II, 276-281, and the New York Times, June 21, 1900.

<sup>64</sup> Olcott claims that McKinley had taken Vice Presi-

Presumable this personal intervention of the President decided Roosevelt. He signified his consent, and late Wednesday night Hanna gave out the statement that settled the matter for the delegates:

. . . In the present situation, with the strong and earnest sentiment of the delegates from all parts of the country for Governor Roosevelt, and since President McKinley is to be nominated without a dissenting voice, it is my judgment that Governor Roosevelt should be nominated with the same unanimity.<sup>65</sup>

On Thursday, June 21, McKinley was nominated unanimously, with Roosevelt making a seconding speech. The Governor then heard his own name placed in nomination for the second place by Colonel Lafayette Young, of Iowa. He received all the votes except his own. The results were announced--with a good deal of personal satisfaction, it was noticed--by the chairman of the Convention, who was no other than the Senator from Massachusetts, Henry Cabot Lodge.<sup>66</sup>

From what we have seen, it is clear that various forces combined, in a peculiar set of circumstances, to bring about Roosevelt's nomination. The New York machine, under Platt, wanted the Governor out of the State. "Matt" Quay wanted to

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dent Hobart into his confidence and had made him a trusted adviser. Hobart "achieved an influence both at the White House and the Capitol. . . . There is no doubt that Mr. McKinley meant to extend the same courtesy" to Roosevelt.--McKinley, II, 283.

<sup>65</sup> Croly, Hanna, 317.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Lodge, Correspondence, I, 465.

embarrass Mark Hanna by forcing Roosevelt on the national ticket, and he used his skill in political maneuvering to good effect. President McKinley refused to favor any one candidate over another, and he sincerely desired that the majority of the Convention make the choice, whoever it might be. Roosevelt, finally, was certainly the popular favorite, and by his action in coming to Philadelphia as well as by his refusal to decline absolutely, he had made it possible for the delegates to have their way.

It is equally clear from the available evidence that Senator Platt played only a minor role in the accomplishment of the end he desired. Yet, as Gosnell remarks,

this does not alter the fact that Platt's prestige was greatly enhanced among certain of his New York constituents by the results of the Philadelphia Convention. Of course, Roosevelt was not "shelved;" he was simply "kicked up-stairs into the vice-presidency." Platt chuckled, the "Sunday school" was hilarious, and the party organs expanded profusely upon the virtues of the Rough Rider.<sup>67</sup>

How short-lived would be this complacent mirth! Who could have foreseen the awful change that 1901 would bring? Who indeed? Certainly not Platt; nor Quay, whose masters, the Pennsylvania industrialists, were to suffer so much at the hands of President Roosevelt. Only Hanna, it seems, had some faint prophetic

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67 Gosnell, Boss Platt, 122.

glimmer.<sup>68</sup> His worst forebodings were to be realized by the two pistol-shots fired in Buffalo in September, 1901. Those shots transformed Theodore Roosevelt's "shelf" into the "throne" from which a new ruler was to inaugurate a new era in the political life of the country.

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<sup>68</sup> On June 14 Hanna said in an interview: "At this convention, if ever, the Vice-Presidential nomination should be made a serious question, and a man chosen . . . who would, if possible, give the country an Administration equally as good as that of McKinley if he should by any mishap to the President ascend to the first place. That is the whole matter in a nutshell."--New York Times, June 15, 1900. Just before he finally surrendered in the Convention itself, he shot at the pro-Roosevelt men around him: "Don't any of you realize that there is only one life between this madman and the White House?"--Pringle, Roosevelt, 223.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

In 1881 Theodore Roosevelt at twenty-three was elected to the New York State Assembly, his first public office. Less than twenty years later he became President of the United States. At every step in that remarkable rise he worked with and was supported by the regular Republican party organization, yet he was never a part of the organization. Until he became Governor he had never been in the behind-the-scenes councils of the party leaders.

He had made his own way, had pushed himself forward and upward, but always with the support of the machine. He never scrupled at accepting its help, yet he often clashed with it from his first year in the Assembly. He remained independent, yet continued to advance by means of co-operation with the acknowledged leaders. This fact is eloquent testimony to his qualities of intelligence, shrewd common sense, amiability, hard work and ambition.

In the summer of 1898 Colonel Roosevelt found himself in an enviable position. Because he had just added a glamorous

war record to his reputation for honesty, courage and administrative ability, he found the nomination for governor coming to him; he did not have to seek it. He was in a position to help the New York Republican party, which gave him a definite advantage in his subsequent relations with the Platt organization.

At the same time he was risking a good deal. By throwing in his lot with the organization, he knew he would have to rise or fall with it. By the very fact that he accepted its offer he lowered himself immeasurably in the eyes of very many Independents. The election results, while giving him victory, showed that thousands of independent votes had been lost. He was gambling with the machine; if he had lost in November, 1898, he would have been very long in repairing the harm. Moreover, if it was true he had brought victory to the machine, no less truly did he owe his election to its support. That, too, was proved by the counting of the ballots in November.

Since Roosevelt's nomination and election was such a co-operative venture, with mutual benefits to both sides, it should perhaps be expected that the subsequent administration would be marked by the same spirit of co-operation. So it was, for the most part. Senator Platt found Roosevelt more obliging in many ways than Governor Black had been. The Saturday conferences in New York City were so frequent that they gave scandal to the Independents, and caused the Democrats to nod their

heads knowingly. With Roosevelt, Platt found that in most of the patronage and appointments things were as they had been. On the other hand the Governor readily enough obtained the organization support necessary to get the legislation he wanted. An outstanding instance was the White Civil Service law which Roosevelt so much desired; it was made a "party measure," and so in spite of the opposition of some individuals, who might otherwise have caused trouble, it went through without a hitch.

The original agreement between Roosevelt and Platt had stipulated that the Governor would not "make war" on the organization, while the party leaders would not try to force Roosevelt to agree to anything he thought was wrong. On the appointments of Superintendents of Public Works and of Insurance, Roosevelt felt that force was being applied on behalf of "wrong" causes, and so he "made war." In the franchise tax matter the underhanded methods of the machine in trying to kill the Ford bill were the equivalent of using force, and so justified the "war" tactics he employed in getting the measure passed.

During the two-year period, the two men maintained friendly relations without becoming friends. Theirs was a strictly business partnership rather than a common enterprise of friends working toward a common goal. Roosevelt was looking primarily for a successful, i.e. popularly approved, administration of the governorship; only thus would it be the stepping

stone he intended it to be. Platt was interested primarily in the continued growth and strengthening of the party organization. Here again, each needed the other. Roosevelt had to have machine support in the legislature if he was to "do good work," as he put it, while it was only by doing good work that he could pass on to higher things. Platt, on the other hand, was also eager to have a good record to show at the end of the two years, for this would insure another Republican victory. The Boss, though, had to be more careful than the Governor about the type of "good work" done, otherwise it would work against him.. The franchise tax bill was "good" in Roosevelt's eyes, partly because it was a step towards social justice, but chiefly because it worked to the advantage of the people and hence was highly popular. To Platt the same bill was "bad," because it antagonized the corporations and so would result, if not in killing the goose that laid the golden eggs, at least in so frightening the poor thing that the egg output would be greatly reduced. The same was true regarding the appointment of a successor to Payn in the Insurance Department.

I am convinced that if Platt had had his own way, he would have been happy to have Roosevelt for a second term as Governor, but in that case he would not have been "Boss" Platt. It was the very nature of his leadership that forced him to push Roosevelt for the vice presidency. That leadership was founded

first on the campaign funds he was able to collect for distribution to local units of the organization; and secondly on the harmony he was able to nourish among the lesser leaders and factions. The big contributors of funds had been angered and alarmed by Roosevelt's ideas and methods, while the disaffection of "Lou" Payn could well lead to some serious disruption of order in the party ranks. Therefore, Roosevelt had to go.

The two-year period under discussion terminated in apparent victory for Platt and apparent defeat for Roosevelt. How apparent the defeat was, became immediately evident in September, 1901; that the end of Platt's power was at hand was seen only gradually. He could not have suspected that the man he chose to succeed Roosevelt, Benjamin Odell, was to unite with the new President, to "shelve" slowly but inexorably the old Easy Boss himself. The bitter medicine he had so often handed out to so many men in New York politics was to be forced down his own throat, by two men he had "made." Politics is not a nice business.

## CRITICAL ESSAY ON AUTHORITIES

### I. PRIMARY MATERIAL

The published letters of Roosevelt were invaluable to the author of this thesis. Letters from Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt Cowles: 1870-1918, New York, 1924, was helpful in several instances. Of much greater service was Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge: 1884-1918, 2 vols. New York, 1925. Here there are many more letters, and their subject matter is chiefly politics.

The autobiographies were helpful in a limited way. The Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt, Louis J. Land, ed., New York, 1910; and Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography, New York, 1926. Neither book can be accepted at face value as accurate history; but on several situations they gave an added viewpoint for judging what actually happened. When they both treat the same incident, the details they both agree on are likely to be true. A third Autobiography, that of George Dewey, New York, 1913, was used for only one reference; as a source of historical material it is less qualified even than the other two autobiographies mentioned above. The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens, New York, 1931, was quoted once from Pringle's life of Roosevelt.

The New York Times and the New York Tribune, 1898-1900, were very helpful, as may be judged by the many references to them in this work.

There was a limited amount of pertinent material in the Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 1898-1900, at the Library of Congress in Washington. This unpublished collection consists chiefly in Governor Roosevelt's official correspondence.

### II. SECONDARY MATERIAL

DeAlva Stanwood Alexander, Four Famous New Yorkers: The Political Careers of Cleveland, Platt, Hill and Roosevelt,

New York, 1923, is volume four of a series on the political history of the State of New York. It goes into a good deal of detail in many phases of the period it covers, and gives helpful statistics, but it is not heavily documented. The chief value of Joseph Bucklin Bishop, Theodore Roosevelt and His Time: Shown in His Own Letters, 2 vols., New York, 1920, is the letters they contain. For the rest the work is a one-sided, all-praise account of a hero. Herbert Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna, New York, 1912, is a not very critical biography. Arthur Wallace Dunn, From Harrison to Harding, New York, 1922, was quoted once from Pringle's life of Roosevelt. Harold F. Gosnell, Boss Platt and His New York Machine, Chicago, 1924, is one of the finest books of its kind the author has seen. The subject is handled exhaustively, the book is heavily documented. Stephen Gwynn, The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice, New York, 1929, 2 vols.; quoted once from Pringle's life of Roosevelt. Matthew Josephson, The President Makers, New York, 1940, seems to be objective and critical; the author used it only a little. J. Hampton Moore, Roosevelt and the Old Guard, Philadelphia, 1925, has value in being written by a man who knew Roosevelt personally. Lacks references and footnotes, but the recollections seem accurate and trustworthy. His estimate of Roosevelt in the introduction is outstanding. Charles S. Olcott, William McKinley, 2 vols., New York, 1916, is an appreciative life of the martyr-President; not too critical. He has some good material on the Convention of 1900, e.g. extensive quotations from diaries. Probably the outstanding life of Roosevelt, so far, is Henry F. Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt: A Biography, New York, 1931. It is critical and well documented. The pleasing style makes the book extremely readable. William Roscoe Thayer, The Life and Letters of John Jay, 2 vols., New York, 1915, consists chiefly of Jay's sparkling letters, with enough remarks by the author to fill in their background.

The interesting article in Collier's Weekly, "Power and Glory," by Walter Davenport and Robert B. Vale, concerns Senator Penrose, Quay's successor in Pennsylvania politics. Though not documented, it gives a good understanding of the feud between Hanna and Quay. Julius W. Pratt, "The 'Large Policy' of 1898," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIX, 1932-1933, 219-224, is an excellent account of the expansionists of the 1890's; he has written a book on the subject, also. J. L. Stevens, "Governor Roosevelt," McClure's Magazine, XIII, 63, was quoted once from Gosnell's book on Boss Platt.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **Lawrence Joseph Cross, S.J.** has been read and approved by three members of the Department of **History**.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

January 4, 1951  
Date

Charles H. Metzger  
Signature of Adviser